

Important Monthly Current Affairs Capsule – May 2020

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Important Days

Date	Day	Theme/Others
May 1	International Labour Day/May Day	Coronavirus
May 2	World Tuna Day	Observed 1 st time in 2017.
May 2	International Astronomy Day (Spring)	Next Astronom Day – September 26
May 3	World Press Freedom Day	Journalism without Fear or Favour
1 st Sunday of May	International Dawn Chorus Day	NA
1 st Sunday of May	World Laughter Day	1 st celebration took place at Mumbai in 1998
May 4	Coal Miners Day	NA
May 4	International Firefighters' Day	NA
May 5	World Asthma Day	Enough Asthma Death (Organized by Global Initiative for Asthma)
May 5 (Celebrated since 1991)	International MidWife Day	Midwives with women: celebrate, demonstrate, mobilise, unite – our time is NOW!
May 5	World Hand Hygiene Day	Save Lives: Clean Your Hands
May 6	International No Diet Day	1 st NND celebrated in the UK (1992)
May 7	World Athletics Day	Athletics for a Better World
May 7	Vesak (Day of Full Moon in May)	Observed by United Nations
May 8	World Red Cross Day	Founder of Red Cross was Henry Dunant
May 8	International Thalassaemia Day	The dawning of a new era for thalassaemia: Time for a global effort to make novel therapies accessible and affordable to patients
2 nd Saturday of May	World Migratory Bird Day	Birds Connect Our World (Celebrated twice a year - May & October)
2 nd Sunday of May	International Mother's Day	-
May 11	National Technology Day	-
May 12	International Nurses Day	Nurses: A Voice to Lead – Nursing the World to Health
May 15	International Day of Families	Families in Development: Copenhagen & Beijing + 25
3 rd Friday of May	National Endangered Species Day	NA

3 rd Saturday of May	Armed Forces Day	Tribute to the men and women who served the United States Armed Forces
May 16	National Dengue Day	Suggested by the Union Health Ministry
May 16	International Day of Living Together in Peace	NA
May 16	International Day of Light	#IDL2020 and #SEETHELIGHT.
May 17	World Hypertension Day	Measure Your Blood Pressure, Control It, Live Longer
May 17	World Telecommunication and Information Society Day	Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
May 18	International Museum Day (Coordinated by International Council of Museums)	Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion
May 18	World AIDS Vaccine Day/HIV Vaccine Awareness Day	1 st celebrated in May 1998
May 20	World Metrology Day	Measurements for Global Trade
May 20	World Bee Day (Birthday of Slovenian apiculture pioneer Anton Janša)	Save the Bees (1 st celebrated in 2018)
May 21	Anti-Terrorism Day	Death anniversary of former PM Rajiv Gandhi
May 21	International Tea Day	At first, December 15 was observed as International Tea Day
May 21	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development	Declared by UNESCO in 2001
May 22	International Day for Biological Diversity	Our solutions are in nature
May 23	World turtle Day	NA
May 23	International Day to End Obstetric Fistula	End gender inequality! End health inequities! End Fistula now! (Observed since 2013)
May 25	International Missing Children's Day	First observed in 2001
May 25	World Thyroid Day	NA
May 28	World Hunger Day	NA
May 28	World Menstrual Hygiene Day	Periods in Pandemic
May 29	International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers	Women in Peacekeeping – A Key to Peace
May 29	World Digestive Health Day	Gut Microbiome: A Global Perspective
May 29	International Everest Day	Declared in the memory of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay of Nepal and Edmund Hillary of New

		Zealand
May 30	World Vape Day	NA
May 31	World No Tobacco Day	#Tobacco Exposed
May 25 - 31	International Thyroid Awareness Week	NA

Important Banking News

RBI

RBI cuts repo rate by 40 bps to 4%

- Reserve Bank of India cut the **repo rate** by **40 basis points** from **4.4 per cent** to **4 per cent**, reducing the **reverse repo rate at 3.35 per cent** to maintain accommodative stance. The RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das stated that the six-member Monetary Policy Committee voted 5:1 in favour of 40 bps cut in interest rate.
- The RBI Governor stated, private consumption has seen biggest blow due to COVID-19 outbreak, following investment demand has halted big time impacting the government revenues severely due to slowdown in economic activity.
- The inflation outlook is highly uncertain with elevated level of inflation in pulses being worrisome and therefore requires review of import duties.
- GDP growth in 2020-21 goes in negative territory. The headline inflation may remain firm in first half of year; ease in the second half, falling below 4 per cent in Q3/Q4 of financial year 20-21.

RBI extends benefits under SLF-MF to all banks

- The **RBI** allowed **regulatory benefits** to banks meeting the liquidity needs of mutual funds without using **RBI's Special Liquidity Facility for MFs (SLF-MFs)**.
- This means banks using their own funds to meet liquidity needs of mutual funds, and purchasing investment-grade corporate bonds, commercial papers (CP), debentures and certificates of deposit (CD) held by MFs can claim the regulatory benefits available under SLF-MF scheme. The decision was taken based on requests received from banks, RBI stated in a statement.
- RBI opened a special liquidity facility of **Rs 50,000 crore** to ease the liquidity strain on mutual funds, which had intensified due to redemption pressures sparked by the closure of some debt schemes.
- The central bank also granted certain regulatory benefits to banks using the window. The liquidity availed under this window could be classified as **held-to-maturity (HTM)** even beyond **25 per cent** of the total investment permitted in the HTM portfolio. The exposures under the facility won't be reckoned under the Large Exposure Framework (LEF).
- Meanwhile, RBI extended the amended market trading hours until further notice and will review it when the government announces directions pertaining to the lockdown. As per the revised timings, RBI regulated market opens at 10 am instead of 9 am earlier, while the closing timings have been revised to 2 pm for all segments.
- The amended trading hours i.e., from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm for RBI-regulated markets that were effective till the close of business on April 30, 2020, shall be extended till further notice, it stated.

RBI cancels licence of Mumbai-based CKP Cooperative Bank

CKP Co-operative Bank Ltd. The licence of

CKP Co-operative Bank Ltd has been cancelled with effect from the close of business on **April 30, 2020**, as the bank's financial position had worsened.

- In its order, the central bank has maintained that the CKP Co-operative Bank Ltd was not in a position to pay its present and future depositors due to its financial instability.
- The RBI stated, The CKP Co-operative Bank Ltd., Mumbai, is prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking' which includes acceptance of deposits and repayment of deposits.
- The Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Pune, Maharashtra, has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the affairs of CKP Co-operative Bank Ltd. and appoint a liquidator for the bank.
- The bank is not satisfying the requirement of minimum capital and reserves....The bank is not in a position to pay its present and future depositors, thereby not complying with Section 22(3) (a) read with Section 56 of the Act, the RBI stated.
- The central bank further stated that the CKP Co-operative Bank's efforts for revival have been far from adequate though it was given ample time and opportunity and dispensations.

RBI extends moratorium for 3 more months

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has extended the moratorium on term loans and deferment of interest on working capital facilities by **three more** months to **August 31, 2020**. The three month moratorium and deferment was to come to an end on May 31.
- The RBI also stated the deferred interest on the working capital facility can be converted into funded interest on term loan, repayable by March 31, 2021.
- With companies unable to tap the capital markets, the RBI has increased the single borrower exposure limit for banks to **25 per cent** of their capital funds

RBI extends Rs.15,000 crore credit line for EXIM Banks

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** decided to extend a **Rs.15,000 crore** line of credit to the Export-Import Bank of India (**EXIM Bank**) for **90 days** to meet its foreign currency resource requirements. The central bank also stated it will rollover its Rs.15,000 crore special refinance facility for the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) by another 90 days.
- The line of credit for EXIM Bank comes with a rollover of up to one year so as to enable it to avail a US dollar swap facility.
- The RBI had earlier announced a special refinance facility of Rs.15,000 crore to SIDBI at RBI's policy repo rate (now at 4 per cent against 4.40 per cent earlier) for a period of 90 days for on lending/refinancing. This will provide greater flexibility to SIDBI.
- In order to provide greater flexibility to SIDBI, it has been decided to roll over the facility at the end of the 90th day for another period of 90 days, the RBI stated.

RBI imposes penalty on 3 lenders

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, stated it has imposed a monetary penalty on **Bank of India** (Rs.5 crore), **Karnataka Bank** (Rs.1.20 crore) and **Saraswat Co-operative Bank** (Rs.30 lakh).
- The central bank, in a statement, stated it has imposed the penalty on Bank of India for non-compliance with certain provisions of the directions issued by it on 'Income Recognition, Asset Classification (IRAC) and provisioning

pertaining to advances - Divergence in NPA (non-performing asset) accounts', 'opening of current accounts by banks – Need for discipline', and 'classification and reporting of frauds.'

- In the case of Karnataka Bank, the RBI imposed the penalty for non-compliance with certain provisions of the directions issued by it on 'Prudential Norms on IRAC and provisioning pertaining to advances - Divergence in NPA Accounts' and 'Prudential norms on IRAC and Provisioning pertaining to Advances.'
- In the case of Saraswat Co-operative Bank, the RBI imposed the penalty for non-compliance with directions issued by it on 'IRAC norms.'
- In all three cases, the RBI stated: "This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers vested in RBI under the... **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**. This action is based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank with its customers."

RBI imposes Rs.4 crore penalty on Citibank

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has imposed a **penalty of Rs.4 crore** on **Citibank** for non-compliance of no-objection certificate (NOC) norms at the time of opening current accounts.
- The US based foreign bank was penalised for non-compliance with the directions issued by RBI on obtaining declaration from customers about credit facilities enjoyed with other banks, granting non-fund based facilities to non-constituent borrowers, verifying data available in CRILC database and obtaining No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from lending banks at the time of opening current accounts, and submission of compliance to risk assessment findings.
- Earlier, RBI had imposed a fine of Rs.6.5 crore on three banks, Bank of India, Karnataka Bank and Saraswat Co-operative Bank. While Bank of India (BoI) was fined Rs.5 crore, Karnataka Bank and Saraswat Co-operative Bank were fined Rs.1.2 crore and Rs.30 lakh, respectively.

Policy Rates

Parameter	Percentage
Repo Rate	4%
Reverse Repo Rate	3.35%
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	4.25%
Bank Rate	4.25%
Cash Reserve Ratio	3%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio	18%

SBI

SBI cuts benchmark lending rate by 15 basis points

- **State Bank of India** slashed benchmark lending rate by **15 basis points** and introduced **Special Deposit Scheme** for senior citizens with higher interest rate. With that, the marginal cost of funds based lending rate comes down to **7.25 per cent**, from **7.40 per cent** with effect from **10th of May**.
- But, to safeguard the interests of senior citizens, the bank has introduced a new product '**SBI Wecare Deposit**' in the retail **term deposit** segment.
- Under this new product, an additional 30 basis points premium will be payable for senior citizen's retail term deposits with Five Years and above tenure only. This scheme would be open until 30th of September.

- But, SBI slashed its interest rates on retail term deposits by 20 basis points for up to 3 Years tenure, effective from 12th of May.

ADB

ADB signs 177 million dollars loan to upgrade major roads, highways in Maharashtra

- **Asian Development Bank** -ADB signed a **177 million US dollars** loan to upgrade **450 km** of **state highways and major district roads** in **Maharashtra** .
- Under the Maharashtra state road improvement project, two major district roads and 11 state highways, with combined length of 450 km will be upgraded to two-lane standard across seven districts. It stated, the projects would improve connectivity to national highways, interstate roads, seaports, airports, rail hubs, district headquarters, industrial areas, enterprise clusters and agricultural areas.
- Improved mobility will expand development and livelihood opportunities outside of the state's major urban centres to second-tier cities and towns thus reducing income disparities.
- The release stated, the project will also focus on training the Maharashtra Public Works Department project staff to build their capacity in climate change adaptation and disaster resilient features in road design, road maintenance planning and road safety.

IMF

IMF Approves \$18 Billion Emergency Financing For 50 Countries During COVID-19

- **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has already authorised financial assistance for **50 member countries** during the coronavirus pandemic, stated IMF Spokesperson Gerry Rice.
- The IMF's Executive Board has approved financing under the **emergency facilities** at record speed for **50 countries**, totalling about **18 billion dollars** at this point. It is an IMF moving at an unprecedented speed in an unprecedented way to meet this unprecedented challenge, he stated. Rice stated the emergency assistance for COVID-19 is not comparable with normal IMF programmes since the funds are not tied to certain conditions.
- Importantly, these facilities allow the IMF to provide emergency assistance without the need to have a full-fledged programme. So, they do not entail the usual IMF conditionality, he stated.
- In order to ensure full transparency and prevent any misuse of funds, the IMF asked member countries who apply for financing to commit that it is only used for urgent purposes related to COVID-19.
- All member governments who receive emergency financing from the IMF to commit in their letters of intent to ensure that this assistance is used for the urgent purposes agreed under the emergency financing. These letters of intent are important and they are published by member countries and they are available for anyone to review on the IMF website.
- The IMF called for the suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries from bilateral creditors.

AIIB

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to offer loan of \$500 million to aid efforts

- Beijing-backed **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** will offer a **\$500 million loan** to aid **India's Covid-19 efforts**. The financing will enable the Government of India to scale up efforts to limit the transmission of cases, strengthen the

health system to expand its response capacity and enhance preparedness to manage future outbreaks, AIIB stated in a statement.

- The project is funded by **AIIB's Covid-19 Crisis Recovery Facility** created to adapt to urgent financing needs of the Bank's members impacted by the pandemic.
- It was created as part of the coordinated international response to counter the Covid-19 crisis, has an initial size of **\$5-10 billion** to support AIIB members' urgent economic, financial and public health pressures and quick recovery from the crisis, the company stated.
- The project also supports the purchase of medical equipment, enhanced disease detection capabilities and strengthened research. It is expected to address the needs of infected people, at-risk populations, medical and emergency personnel and service providers at medical and testing facilities as well as national and animal health agencies.
- Another multilateral bank. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is putting together a \$2.2 billion package to support India's Covid-19.

World Bank

World Bank gives \$1 billion as social security fund for India

- The **World Bank** has approved **one billion dollar package** for India's urban poor and migrant workers during the coronavirus crisis.
- It will leverage the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana** to help protect the poor and vulnerable, stated World Bank's Country Director for India Junaid Ahmad.
- The social protection package is in addition to the previous package of one billion dollars allocated to India for COVID-19 emergency response and health systems.
- Ahmad stated the new funding will ensure that migrants are supported in various states. It will ensure portability so that benefits move with the workers.
- It will provide a safety net to workers in the informal sector. Nearly 90 per cent of workers are in the unorganised sector, he stated.
- The funding will underpin support to state governments who will use local administrations, self-help groups and ASHA workers to ensure that safety net is delivered to these citizens.

NDB

India gets USD 1 billion loan from BRICS' New Development Bank to fight COVID-19

- The **New Development Bank** of the **BRICS countries** has fully disbursed **USD one billion** emergency assistance loan to **India** to help it contain the spread of COVID-19 and reduce human, social and economic losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB) was established by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries in 2014 and is headed by veteran Indian banker **K V Kamath**. (Marcos Prado Troyjo, former deputy economy minister of Brazil will replace KV Kamath as the president of the New Development Bank's (NDB).He will take charge on July 7, 2020)

- The purpose of the bank is to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other emerging economies and developing nations, complementing the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.
- The '**Emergency Assistance Program Loan**' to India was approved by the NDB Board of Directors on April 30, and it is aimed at supporting the Indian government to contain the spread of COVID-19 and reduce human, social and economic losses caused by the coronavirus outbreak.
- "The NDB is fully committed to supporting its member countries in the time of calamity.
- The programme's scope of financing includes Healthcare Sector Emergency Response and Strengthening Social Safety Net for expenditures already incurred since January 1, 2020, and the expected public expenditures for onward transmission containment and social safety net associated with COVID-19 up to the March of 2021, it stated.

Other Banking News

HDFC Bank releases song to keep up hopes up amidst Covid-19 pandemic

- To keep up hopes up amidst the ongoing national lockdown and coronavirus pandemic, **HDFC Bank** released a collaborative song titled **#HumHaarNahiMaanenge (We will not lose)**.
- Composed by Oscar and Grammy Award-winning musician **AR Rahman**, with lyrics by **Prasoon Joshi**, the song is "a tribute to the indomitable spirit of India and millions of Indians who are standing together to fight the Covid-19 pandemic".
- The song was conceptualised as a clarion call to spread hope, positivity and motivation. The powerful, emotional track reminds people that we are in this together and we will get through it together, HDFC Bank stated.
- The bank stated it will contribute Rs 500 each time the song is shared via social media towards the PM-CARES Fund.

Irdai sets up panel to draft standard professional indemnity policy for insurance intermediaries

- **Irdai** has set up a panel to frame **standard professional indemnity policy** for **insurance intermediaries** that can be issued by all the insurers.
- The development came after Irdai witnessed several instances where policies taken by insurance intermediaries did not comply with the regulatory provisions.
- Insurance intermediaries such as insurance brokers, insurance web aggregators, and corporate agent are required to take professional indemnity insurance policies governed by different regulations.
- The panel has been asked to prepare a standard professional indemnity policy "which covers all the contingencies and conditions (retroactive date, indemnity limits, excess, etc) mentioned in the Regulations" that can be issued by all insurers.
- It is being **headed** by **Yegnapriya Bharat, CGM (Non-Life), Irdai**. Its members are Umesh Rathod (The New India Assurance Co), Kasturi Sengupta (National Insurance Co), Surbhi Goel (HDFC ERGO General Insurance Co), and Najim B (TATA AIG General Insurance Co).

Suryoday SFB launches new working capital product

- **Suryoday Small Finance Bank** has rolled out a **working capital product** with a **small overdraft (OD)** limit on a pilot basis in two branches – Trichy (Tamil Nadu) and Cuttack (Odisha) – to help its customers meet the urgent liquidity requirements during the lockdown.

- To begin with, the bank has set a limit of **Rs.5,000** for this working capital product. But this could be increased anytime. The bank plans to scale up the number of branches offering this product to 100 in no time if it sees good traction.
- For example, if a customer wants only Rs.2,000, he can take that, be comfortable. But the limit available is Rs.5,000. So, he can avail the balance Rs.3,000 whenever he wants, stated Baskar Babu R, MD and CEO.
- Babu emphasised that at 15 per cent, the interest rate on this product is lower than the bank's regular microfinance loan, which is all about doorstep delivery to service the customer.

Nabard disburses Rs.12,767 cr to State Co-op Banks, RRBs

- **The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard)**, stated it has disbursed **Rs.12,767 crore** to **State Co-operative Banks (StCBs)** and **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** across the country to augment their resources for extending credit to farmers during the ongoing lockdown.
- There are 33 StCBs and 45 RRBs in the country, and they are important intermediaries in the rural credit structure.
- The RBI had announced a Rs.50,000-crore refinance facility for three AIFIs – Nabard, the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), and the National Housing Bank (NHB).
- These AIFIs play an important role in meeting the long-term funding requirements of agriculture and the rural sector, small industries, housing finance companies, non-banking finance companies, and microfinance institutions (MFIs).
- Of the Rs.50,000-crore refinance, Nabard got **Rs.25,000 crore** for refinancing RRBs, co-operative banks and MFIs. Nabard stated it has augmented the resources of the rural banks to the tune of Rs.30,021 crore to since the second half of March 2020 when the lockdown came into force in different States as a measure to contain the spread of Covid19 pandemic.

KVGB launches emergency loan facility for farmers

- The **Dharwad-headquartered Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB)** has launched an **emergency loan facility** for farmers.
- Chairman of KVGB, stated that the loan facility will be for the existing farmers who have been regular as on February 29. A maximum loan of up to **Rs.50,000** will be provided to meet unforeseen expenses. It is repayable within a period of **three years**.
- He stated that Covid-19 has affected farmers and workforce in the informal sector as well. As a result, farmers with small and marginal holdings are facing financial crisis. To meet the emergency requirements for agriculture and domestic purposes, the bank has come forward with this loan facility.
- He appealed to the farming community to approach their nearby KVGB branches for this loan facility.

PNB opens emergency credit line for MSMEs to enhance liquidity

- **Punjab National Bank** stated it has opened an **emergency credit line** for the **MSME sector** to help it tide over liquidity issues amid the coronavirus crisis.
- It has also liberalised the **working capital assessment (LWCA) model** for MSME borrowers having limits of **Rs 5 crore** and above, the state-owned lender stated at a webinar hosted with industry body PHD Chamber to address the issues of micro, small and medium enterprises.
- There is a facility of standby line of credit for MSMEs as well as **PNB COVID-19 Emergency Credit Facility (PNB-CECF)**, the bank stated.
- There are also other policy initiatives like restructuring of MSME advances, interest subvention scheme, TReDS, Mudra loan products, Credit Guarantee Trust for MSMEs and PSB loans in 59 minutes, it added.

- This forms a part of its '**Mega MSME Outreach**' aimed at connecting with its MSME customers across the country and to address their challenges.
- The public sector lender stated that it has been contacting more than 1 lakh MSME borrowers through its 'Each One Reach Ten Each Day' initiative to update them about its schemes on a daily basis.
- Through the online platform of Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS), MSMEs can avail timely credits against their bills, which helps in managing their cashflows efficiently, PNB stated.

SBI General Insurance Launches Arogya Sanjeevani Health Insurance Policy A Standard Health Insurance Policy

- **SBI General Insurance** launched the **standard health insurance policy – Arogya Sanjeevani Health Insurance Policy SBI General Insurance**. The policy provides hospitalisation cover anywhere in India with sums insured ranging from **Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs**.
- Pushan Mahapatra, MD & CEO, SBI General Insurance stated, The introduction of Arogya Sanjeevani is a welcome development as this is a product which has been designed at the instance of Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) with standard coverage and affordable premiums.
- Arogya Sanjeevani will cover the hospitalisation treatment cost of COVID-19 and will help in making affordable health care more accessible in times like these.

Federal Bank, MoneyGram tie up for direct-to-bank account credit service

- **MoneyGram Payment Systems** has tied up with **Federal Bank** to offer a cost-effective **direct-to-bank account** credit option for customers in India.
- Through this partnership, millions will be able to receive deposits directly in their bank accounts without leaving the confines of their homes, which is imperative in the current situation.
- Private sector Federal Bank has an over **15 per cent** share of the country's remittance market and expects that the tie-up with MoneyGram will give the business a further boost.
- According to the World Bank, **India** remains the **world's top recipient of remittances** and is estimated to have received **more than \$82 billion** in remittances in 2019.

FM announces third tranche of COVID-19 relief package, amends Essential Commodity Act

- After relief measures for small businesses, shadow banks, migrant labourers, street vendors and small farmers, Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced **Rs 1.63 lakh crore** package for agriculture, fisheries and allied activities, and paved the way for amendment of Essential Commodity Act and interstate trade for farmers.
- Experts pointed out that while many announcements of the third tranche of **Rs 20 lakh crore** stimulus package to stave off COVID-19-induced crisis were an extension of what the government had already provided in the previous budget, the amendment of six-and-a-half-decade-old Essential Commodities Act will go a long way for agriculture sector reforms.
- The amendment of the Essential Commodities Act and the agricultural marketing reforms proposed by the finance minister are indeed heartening. We hope that the states will fall in line with these changes," stated
- The finance minister also announced that a central law that allows farmers to sell their products as per their choices and also allows interstate trading will be brought about.
- A central law will be formulated to provide adequate choices to farmers to sell produce at attractive prices, barrier-free interstate trade and a framework for e-trading of agriculture produce, Sitharaman stated.
- This will give freedom to farmers to sell their produce "wherever" and to "whoever" without restrictions on selling only to licensees in Agricultural Produce Market Committees or mandis.

Digital Health EMI Network Card

- **Bajaj Finance Limited**, the lending and investing arm of **Bajaj Finserv** offers a **Digital Health EMI Network Card** to make medical expenses affordable.
- Using it, customers can not only access the best treatments over a range of disciplines like endocrinology, dermatology, obstetrics, gynaecology, cosmetic surgery, and more, but also pay for their healthcare, diagnostic and pharmacy bills on No Cost EMIs.
- With partners such as Columbia Asia Hospitals, Apollo Hospitals, Dr.Batra's and more, customers can avail 800+ treatments from over 5,500 healthcare institutions, such as multi-specialty hospitals, pharmacies, diagnostic care centres, slimming centres, dental care clinics and more, spread across 1,000+ cities in India.
- With a pre-approved limit of up to Rs. 4 lakh on the card, customers can conveniently pay for not only their healthcare cost but also for their families. The card comes with a joining fee of only Rs. 707.
- Upon availing the required medical treatment in any of the partner clinics or hospitals, customers can simply use the Digital Health EMI Network Card to divide the cost of the bills into 24 No Cost EMIs. The card offers a complimentary Personal Accidental Insurance of Rs.1 lakh for 1 year without any extra charges over the joining fees.

Nabard extends Rs.20,500-cr special liquidity facility to co-op banks, RRBs

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard)**, stated it has extended **Rs.20,500-crore** special liquidity facility to **co-operative banks** (Rs.15,200 crore) and **Regional Rural Banks** (Rs.5,300 crore) in various States.
- This is against the Rs.5,000 crore lent during the first quarter of the last year, Nabard stated in a statement. The special liquidity facility is with a view to augment the resources of the Cooperative banks and RRBs to enable them to extend credit to farmers for taking up pre-monsoon and kharif (summer sown crops) 2020 operations, it added.
- As part of the government's overall Rs.20-lakh-crore special Covid-19 package, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had mentioned that Nabard would extend additional refinance support of Rs.30,000 crore for crop loan requirement of Rural Co-operative Banks and RRBs.
- This is over and above the Rs.90,000 crore to be provided by Nabard through the normal refinance route during this year, she added.
- This front-loaded on-tap refinance facility to 33 State Co-operative banks, 351 District Co-operative Banks, and 43 RRBs will be available on tap, based on their lending .
- Meanwhile, Nabard stated cooperative banks and RRBs have initiated a programme of saturation of KCC (kisan credit cards) and about 12 lakh new KCC cards have been issued by them during the last two months. A total of 4.2 crore KCCs have been issued by Cooperative banks & RRBs as on 31 March, it added.

Kotak Mahindra Bank launches India's 1st zero-contact, video KYC savings account

- In a major development, **Kotak Mahindra Bank (Kotak)** announced the introduction of **Video KYC** to open a full-fledged Kotak 811 savings account – a first in Indian banking. This initiative, presently being launched on a pilot basis for savings accounts, is in line with **Kotak's digital-first strategy** and is a start-to-end fully integrated, zero-contact, completely digital and paperless account opening + Full KYC journey. The **Video KYC process** to onboard new customers will be extended to other products in a phased manner.
- In January 2020, the Reserve Bank of India amended the Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and introduced the video-based KYC option to onboard customers. Kotak is the first bank to integrate the Video KYC process in the account opening journey, as per the company, as per the firm.

- With Video KYC, verification of KYC documents and recording of the customer's signature are completed via a video call with the bank, eliminating the need for a visit to the branch or in-person interaction, biometric verification or sharing of physical documents. After the Video KYC is completed, the customer gets a full-fledged bank account with no restrictions on deposits or account balances, the bank stated.

Canara Bank launches special gold loan biz vertical

- Bengaluru-based public sector lender **Canara Bank**, has launched a special gold loan business vertical.
- The pandemic is seeing the country's socio-economic order undergo a change; managing day-to-day expenses, business continuity, health and family care are becoming challenges. The bank's latest **business vertical** is aimed at helping resolve these issues and support livelihoods in the current challenging times.
- The business vertical is expected to address these needs and to provide **hassle-free credit**. The gold loan products are designed keeping in mind the need for a quick, hassle-free experience for customers, and at low interest cost. The loans are expected to help the customers with much-needed liquidity to revive their business activities, and bring normalcy back to their lives.
- Canara Bank has launched this special gold loan campaign till **June 30** with interest rate as low as **7.85 per cent per annum**.
- The low turnaround time (TAT) – time taken from applying for the loan till the loan is disbursed – and high flexibility of the loan, are the highlights of the product. The loans, which come with flexible repayment options, are payable within one to three years.
- The credit can be utilised for different purposes, such as for agriculture and allied activities, business needs, health emergencies, and personal needs, among numerous other requirements.

Fino Payments Bank to partner with NBFCs to source loans in rural areas

- **Fino Payments Bank (FPB)** is planning to partner with **two-three non-banking finance companies (NBFCs)** to source loans for them in rural areas.
- The bank is expecting good appetite for loans from rural India, where 80 per cent of its 4-odd lakh touch-points are located.
- The payments bank, which started operations in July 2017 and turned profitable at the operating level in FY2020, will be running a few pilots with the NBFCs. FPB will earn fees by arranging loans for its customers from these lenders.
- Rishi Gupta, MD and CEO, observed that some credit demand will emerge post-Covid-19. So, FPB will tie-up with a few NBFCs to meet this demand, especially in the rural side.
- A payments bank is a differentiated bank which can accept demand deposits — current deposits and savings bank deposits — from individuals, small businesses and other entities; issue ATM/debit cards; provide payments and remittance services through various channels including branches, ATMs, business correspondents (BC) and mobile banking; and function as the BC of another bank.

ICICI Bank launches special FD scheme for senior citizens

- Private sector lender **ICICI Bank** announced a **special fixed deposit scheme** for **senior citizens**, which offers a **higher interest rate**.
- Named '**ICICI Bank Golden Years FD**', the scheme offers senior citizens an interest rate of **6.55 per annum** for deposits up to **Rs.2 crore** with tenure of more than **five years to 10 years**.
- It is available from May 20 to September 30, 2020.

- It offers 80 basis points more than what is applicable to general public (non-senior citizens) for the same deposit amount and tenor. Also, it is 30 basis points more than the previous rates offered by the bank, ICICI Bank stated in a statement, adding that resident senior citizens can avail the benefit of this scheme for new FDs as well as renewal of old FDs.
- The customers can avail a loan against their FD up to 90 per cent of principal and accrued interest

Edelweiss General Insurance launches pay as you go Motor OD floater policy

- **Edelweiss General Insurance** has launched an app based **Motor Own Damage floater policy** under the regulatory sandbox of IRDAI.
- Called **Edelweiss SWITCH**, it is a driver-based motor insurance policy, which allows vehicle owners to SWITCH their motor insurance on and off, based on usage and covers multiple vehicles under a single policy.
- It is driver-based insurance, where the insurance is calculated on the age and experience of the driver. Edelweiss SWITCH uses a pay-as-you-use model that allows the customer to pay the premium only on the days they use the vehicle, offering significant cost savings and convenience.
- While the policy covers accidental damage when it is switched on, vehicles will be covered 24x7 against fire and theft, even if the policy is switched off at that time.

Franklin Templeton appoints Kotak Mahindra Bank to assist in monetising assets of 6 wind-up schemes

- **Franklin Templeton Trustee Services** has appointed **Kotak Mahindra Bank** to work together with Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) to assist the trustees in **monetising portfolios of the six schemes** that are being wound up.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank, a highly reputed firm with strong corporate governance practices and deep financial market experience, will, wherever required, act as their agent and provide its independent advice and assistance to the trustees through the entire process.
- The appointment will provide the trustees with the added experience and ability to monetise assets at the earliest possible time.
- These schemes, together having an estimate amount of over Rs 25,000 crore assets under management, were Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund, Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund, and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund.

Canara Bank releases emergency credit facilities for MSMEs

- **Canara Bank** has announced '**CANARA CREDIT SUPPORT**' for all of their borrowers who have been affected by COVID-19.
- The Canara Credit Support is extended as a quick and hassle-free loan to overcome the temporary liquidity mismatches for payment of statutory dues, salary/wages/electricity bill, rent.
- The bank has sanctioned nearly 6 lakh loans amounting to **Rs 4,300 crore** under agriculture, SHGs and Retail categories.
- The Bank has also sanctioned more than Rs 60,000 crore of advances to the Corporates and MSMEs from March till date.
- The government has announced emergency credit line of 20 per cent of the outstanding credit as on February 29 to MSME borrowers having Rs 25 crore outstanding with an annual turnover up to Rs 100 crore. The credit line is 100 per cent guaranteed by the Central government. The facility can be availed up to October 31 at the convenience of the borrower and as per the terms and conditions.

- All standard accounts including SMA 0 and SMA 1 are eligible to avail this facility. About 10 per cent of existing fund based working capital limits or Rs 150 crore whichever is lower is extended under this facility. This limit is over and above the eligible maximum permissible bank finance to the unit. The facility is given for a period of 24 months with 6 months moratorium. The loans are priced very competitively with no processing charges, no margin and no additional security.

BoB plans to sanction Rs 10,000 crore emergency working capital facility for Covid-19 affected businesses

- **Bank of Baroda (BoB)** will sanction **Rs 10,000 crore** as emergency **working capital facility** to COVID-19 affected businesses, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), according to Sanjiv Chadha, MD & CEO.
- The BoB chief emphasised that **extending emergency working capital** is the right thing to do by the Bank's clients so that they can survive the impact of the pandemic and gradually return to normalcy.
- Among the measures announced on May 13 by the Government under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan" package, Banks will be providing additional working capital finance of 20 per cent of their outstanding (MSME) credit as on 29 February 2020. These loans will be 100 per cent guaranteed by the Government.
- MSMEs, with up to Rs 25 crore (loan) outstanding and turnover of up to **Rs 100 crore** (whose accounts are standard), will get guaranteed emergency credit at interest rates of up to 9.25 per cent from banks.
- The public sector bank has availed Rs 6,600 crore from the Reserve Bank of India under the targeted long-term repo operations (collectively under first and second versions) to support non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by purchasing their investment grade corporate bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures.
- BoB has also availed about Rs 1,000 crore under the RBI's standing liquidity facility to support mutual funds.

LIC launches modified PM Vaya Vandana Yojana

- **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** announced the launch of the **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (Modified- 2020) Scheme**.
- This plan will be available for sale commencing from May 26 for **three financial years** – up to **March 31, 2023**. This scheme can be purchased offline as well as online from LIC of India, it stated.
- The Union Cabinet had earlier this month extended the PMVVY or Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, which is a social security scheme for senior citizens.
- LIC is solely authorised to operate this scheme, which works as a Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Pension Scheme subsidised by the Centre.
- The policy term is of 10 years and for policies sold during the first financial year -- up to March 31, 2021, the scheme will provide an assured rate of return of 7.40 per cent per annum payable monthly (which is equivalent to 7.66 per cent per annum) for the entire duration of 10 years, LIC stated.

NABARD sanctions Rs 1,050 crore credit support to West Bengal

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** has sanctioned credit of **Rs 1,050 crore** in the current fiscal so far to **West Bengal** for benefit of **farmers** and **poor people** in rural areas.
- The credit support under **special liquidity facility (SLF)** will be extended to state cooperative banks, regional rural banks and micro-finance institutions (MFIs).
- The NABARD has already disbursed an amount of Rs 720 crore to state cooperative and regional rural banks.
- The lender has sanctioned Rs 300 crore for MFIs, Rs 700 crore for state cooperative banks and Rs 50 crore for regional rural banks.
- The credit flow will provide relief to the farmers in the upcoming kharif season.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs 22nd Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council

- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the 22nd Meeting of the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)**.
- The meeting reviewed the current global and domestic macro-economic situation, financial stability and vulnerabilities issues, major issues likely to be faced by banks and other financial institutions as also regulatory and policy responses, Liquidity / Solvency of NBFCs/HFCs/MFIs and other related issues. Besides, market volatility, domestic resource mobilisation and capital flows issues were also discussed by the Council.
- The Council noted that the COVID-19 Pandemic crisis poses a serious threat to the stability of the global financial system as the ultimate impact of the crisis and the timing of recovery, is uncertain at this point of time.
- The efforts of the Government and regulators are focused on avoiding a prolonged period of dislocation in financial markets.
- The Council took note of the initiatives taken by the Government and the regulators in the recent months to help revive the economy.
- Government and the RBI have announced various fiscal and monetary measures to pre-emptively limit the economic damage and would continue to address the liquidity and capital requirements of the financial institutions.
- The Council also reviewed the action taken by members on the decision taken by FSDC earlier.

SEBI slaps Rs 20 lakh fine on DHFL for violating market norms

- Markets regulator **Sebi** levied a **fine of Rs 20 lakh** on **Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL)** for not complying with market norms while issuing **non-convertible debentures (NCDs)**.
- The markets watchdog had received a reference from **Catalyst Trusteeship Ltd**, a Sebi-registered debenture trustee, pertaining to NCDs issued by DHFL.
- The firm issued 37 NCDs that were publicly placed and 201 NCDs that were privately placed.
- It was found that the company did not create debenture redemption reserve (DRR) for 15 ISINs in the financial year 2016-17 and 37 ISINs in the financial year 2017-18.
- International Securities Identification Numbers (ISINs) are used to number specific securities.
- Besides, it also failed to deposit a little over Rs 700 crore in the financial year 2019-20, towards DRR requirement.
- Additionally, the firm did not submit audited financial result for the financial year 2018-19 as prescribed under the Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) norms.

Revision Points

Name of the Organization	Headquarters	Head of the Organization
Reserve Bank of India	Mumbai	Shaktikanta Das
Life Insurance Corporation of India	Mumbai	M R Kumar
Kotak Mahindra Bank	Mumbai	Prakash Apte
NABARD	Mumbai	Govinda Rajulu Chintala
Axis Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Makhija
Securities and Exchange Board of India	Mumbai	Ajay Tyagi
Insurance Regulatory and	Hyderabad	Subash Chandra Khuntia

Development Authority of India		
HDFC Bank	Mumbai	Aditya Puri
Edelweiss General Insurance Company	Mumbai	Shanai
Fino Payments Bank	Mumbai	Rishi Gupta
State Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajnish Kumar
Bajaj Finserv	Pune	Sanjiv Bajaj
ICICI Bank	Mumbai	Sandeep Bakshi
Federal Bank	Aluva	Shyam Srinivasan
SBI General Insurance	Mumbai	Pushan Mahapatra
Punjab National Bank	New Delhi	S.S Mallikarjuna Rao
Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank	Dharwad	P Gopi Krishna
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	Navi Mumbai	Baskar Babu
Bank of Baroda	Vadodara	Hasmukh Adhia
Airtel Payments Bank	New Delhi	Anubrata Biswas
Bajaj Allianz General Insurance	Pune	Tapan Singhel
Canara Bank	Bengaluru	T.N. Manoharan
National Stock Exchange	Mumbai	Girish Chandra Chaturvedi
Bombay Stock Exchange	Mumbai	Sethurathnam Ravi

Important Financial & Economy Affairs

Recent GDP Projections

Name of Institution	FY- 2019-20	FY- 2020-21	FY- 2021-22
SBI Eco wrap report	4.1%	-6.8%	-
CRISIL	5.3%	-5%	-
Moody's	4.8%	0%	6.6%
FITCH	4.9%	-5%	6.7%
S & P Global Ratings	5%	-5%	7.5%
ICRA	5%	-5%	-
UBS Securities	-	-0.40%	7%
OECD	5.1%	5.6%	-

IMF	4.2%	1.9%	7.4
Ind-Ra	5%	1.9%	-
World Bank	4.8-5%	1.5- 2.8%	-
FICCI	5%	2.5%	-
UN (ESCAP)	5%	4.8%	-
NSO	5%	-	-
EIU	2.5%	2.1%	-
NCAER	4.9%	5.6%	-
Economic Survey	--	6-6.5%	-
Goldman Sachs	-	-5%	-
DBS	4.5%	1%	-
Barclays	2020- Jan- Dec- 0%	0.8%	-
FITCH Solution	4.9%	1.8%	-
CII	-	1.5%	-
NOMURA	-5%	-5.2%	7.9%
CARE	4.7%	1.1-1.2%	-
Bank of America	-	0.5%	-
ADB		4%	6.2%
Bernstein		-7%	
Morgan Stanley	-3%	5.9%	-

Indian economy may contract 0.4% in FY21 on coronavirus pandemic: Nomura

- Foreign brokerages predicted a contraction of **0.4 per cent of India's GDP** in the current financial year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Japanese brokerage Nomura warned of a likely downgrade of the sovereign by global ratings agencies while American brokerage Goldman Sachs (GS) stated RBI will cut rates by another 1 percentage point to arrest the economic slide.
- Analysts across the board have been warning about a heavy economic toll due to the pandemic. Analysts at domestic rating agency Icra have warned of a contraction in the GDP in FY21. The agency has estimated a minus two per cent growth for the country.
- We expect real GDP growth to fall to **-0.5 per cent** y-o-y in 2020 (vs 5.3 per cent in 2019) and by -0.4 per cent in FY21 (vs. 4.6 per cent expected in FY20), analysts at Nomura stated in a note.
- GS also expects the economy to contract by 0.4 per cent and that its estimate is far below the consensus median of 2.7 per cent growth.
- We expect GDP growth of -20 per cent in Q2; while we have upgraded our expectations of recovery after mid-year, with a 10 per cent and 14 per cent q-o-q annualised GDP gain in Q3 and Q4, respectively, it stated.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman launches (INR-USD) F and O contracts on BSE's India INX & NSE's NSE-IFSC at GIFT

- Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** launched **INR-USD (Rupee-Dollar) Futures** and Options contracts on the two International Exchanges, **BSE's India INX** and **NSE's NSE-IFSC**, at GIFT International Financial Services Centre in Gandhinagar through video conference.
- Over the last decade or so a significant market share in financial services related to India has moved to other international financial centres.
- Bringing this business to India is clearly beneficial in terms of economic activity and employment gains for India.
- The launch of INR-USD contracts at the exchanges in GIFT-IFSC is a step in this direction. This will be available 22 hours across all time zones for all global participants from GIFT IFSC.
- Given the world class business environment and competitive tax regime at GIFT-IFSC, it is expected that trading of INR-USD contracts may bring volumes to India.
- This would also bring larger global participation in India through IFSC and connect India's IFSC globally.

India's growth rate projected to slow to 1.2% in 2020: UN report

- The UN slashed India's projected growth rate to **1.2 per cent** in **2020** and forecast that the global economy will contract sharply by **3.2 per cent** as the COVID-19 pandemic paralyses the world, sharply restricting economic activities, increasing uncertainties and unleashing a recession unseen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- The World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2020 released by the UN stated that global gross domestic product is forecast to shrink by **3.2 per cent** in 2020, with only a gradual recovery of lost output projected for 2021.
- Cumulatively, the world economy is expected to lose nearly USD 8.5 trillion in output in 2020 and 2021, nearly wiping out the cumulative output gains of the previous four years," it stated.
- India's economic growth is forecast to slow to 1.2 per cent in 2020, a further deterioration from the already slowed growth of 4.1 per cent in 2019.
- India, which grew at 6.8 per cent in fiscal year 2018, is forecast to recover slightly and clock a 5.5 per cent growth rate in 2021.

Finance Minister announces liquidity support for stressed NBFCs

- Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced a booster shot for **non-banking financial companies (NBFC)**, **housing finance companies (HFC)** and **microfinance institutions (MFI)**.

- The decisions include a **Rs 30,000 crore** Special Liquidity Scheme, which will help the needy NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs with capital, in case they fail to raise money through the traditional debt market routes.
- Besides, the Centre also announced another Rs 45,000 crore Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 2.0 for NBFCs, hoping they will in turn lend it to MSMEs and retail borrowers.
- While the proposed Rs 30,000 crore liquidity support will enhance investments in primary and secondary market transactions in investment-grade debt papers of NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs and increase liquidity, the Rs 45,000 crore Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme will help companies with low credit rating, including that of AA and below, given the sovereign backing for the first 20 per cent of the loss.

PSBs disburse loans worth Rs 5.95 lakh crore in last 2 months

- **Public sector banks (PSBs)** have sanctioned loans worth **Rs 5.95 lakh crore** in the last **two months** to various sectors, including MSMEs, agriculture and corporates, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Of this, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have received **Rs 1.18 lakh crore** from State-run banks between March 1 and May 8 she added.
- PSBs sanctioned loans worth Rs 5.95 lakh crore for more than 46.74 lakh accounts from the MSME, retail, agriculture and corporate sectors between March 1 and May 8, 2020. Total financing worth Rs 1.18 lakh crore was provided to NBFCs.
- Similarly, between March 20 and May 8, State-run lenders contacted 97 per cent of borrowers eligible for emergency credit lines and working capital enhancements, and sanctioned loans worth Rs 65,879 crore, up from the Rs 26,500 crore sanctioned as on May 4, she added.

Global economy could witness losses worth up to USD 8.8 trillion due to COVID-19: ADB

- The **global economy** is expected to suffer **USD 5.8-8.8 trillion** in losses due to the coronavirus pandemic, Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated.
- Of this, the impact on south Asian gross domestic product (GDP) will be to the tune of USD 142-218 billion.
- The global economy could suffer between USD 5.8 trillion and USD 8.8 trillion in losses - equivalent to **6.4 per cent to 9.7 per cent of the global GDP** - as a result of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, ADB stated in a new report subsequent to its economic outlook released in early April.
- The GDP in south Asia will also be lower by **3.9-6.0 per cent**, mainly reflecting the tight restrictions in place in countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, ADB stated in its updated assessment of the Potential Economic Impact of COVID-19.
- The Manila-headquartered multi-lateral funding agency stated that the economic losses in Asia and the Pacific region could range from USD 1.7 trillion under a short containment scenario of three months to USD 2.5 trillion under a long containment scenario of 6 months, with the region accounting for about 30 per cent of the overall decline in global output.
- The People's Republic of China (PRC) could suffer losses between USD 1.1 trillion and USD 1.6 trillion.
- In the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 published on April 3, the agency had estimated COVID-19's global cost to range from USD 2 trillion to USD 4.1 trillion.

India GDP to fall 45 per cent in June quarter, predicts Goldman Sachs

- **Goldman Sachs** now expects India's gross domestic product (GDP) to contract by a record **five per cent** during **2020-21** against a contraction of **0.4 per cent** estimated earlier.
- The -5% growth forecast for FY21 would be deeper compared to all recessions India has ever experienced, it stated.

- The financial services firm pegged fall in the GDP to **45 per cent** in the first quarter of the current financial year over the fourth quarter of the previous financial year (annualised) compared to 20 per cent decline projected earlier.
- However, it now expected sharper rebound in the second quarter of FY'21 that forecast earlier.
- It pegged GDP growth in the quarter at 20 per cent over the previous quarter (annualised) compared to earlier projection of 10 per cent.
- For the next two quarters, the estimates remained unchanged at 14 per cent (Q3) and 6.5 per cent (Q4)

BSE, NSE cut annual listing fee for SMEs by 25 per cent

- The **Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)** and **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** decided to reduce the listing fee for their **SME platforms** by **25 per cent** amid challenges faced by small and medium enterprises due to coronavirus pandemic.
- The fee rebate has been declared following Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's several announcements to rescue the ailing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) sector.
- The revised listing fee structure will be applicable for the existing companies as well as for the firms waiting to be listed on the exchange, BSE stated in a statement.
- SMEs have been hit hard due to economic activities coming to a grinding halt in the wake of Covid-19 crisis. Some of the SMEs are under enormous financial stress to meet their obligations.
- In view of the challenging times faced by SMEs, NSE has decided to provide 25 per cent rebate on the annual listing fees to the SME companies currently listed on the EMERGE platform of the exchange, the exchange stated.
- BSE stated it has decided to bring down its annual listing fee for its SME platform by 25 per cent as part of efforts to support SMEs.
- BSE and NSE had launched their respective SME platforms in 2012 and since then have been facilitating SMEs for raising funds, listing and trading on the exchanges.

Economy likely to contract by 5% in FY21: ICRA

- Ratings agency **ICRA** predicted that India's economy is likely to witness a sharp contraction of **5 per cent** during FY **2020-21**, despite the massive stimulus given under the Self-Reliant India programme.
- Earlier, ICRA had predicted a contraction of around 1-2 per cent.
- Recently, the Centre gave an immediate fiscal support under the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' estimated at a modest 10 per cent of the GDP with a total outlay of Rs 20 lakh crore.
- On April 7, the ratings agency predicted that India's economy is likely to witness a sharp contraction of 4.5 per cent during Q4 FY2020 and is expected to gradually recover to post a GDP growth of just 2 per cent in FY2021.
- ICRA has sharply cut its forecast for Indian GDP growth in FY 2021, post the Covid-19 outbreak.

Edelweiss Mutual Fund to launch second tranche of Bharat Bond ETF

- **Edelweiss Asset Management** announced the launch of the **second tranche** of **Bharat Bond ETF** in July with two new series after initial series in December last year.
- The Bharat Bond ETF programme is an initiative of the government's Department of Investment and Public Asset Management which has given the mandate to Edelweiss AMC to design and manage the product.
- The two new Bharat Bond ETF series will have maturities of **April 2025** and **April 2031**.
- Through the launch of these two new ETF series, Edelweiss Mutual Fund proposes to raise an initial amount of Rs 3,000 crore with a greenshoe option of Rs 11,000 crore based on market demand.

- The ETF will invest in constituents of Nifty Bharat Bond Indices consisting of AAA-rated public sector companies. Bharat Bond Funds of Funds (FOF) with similar maturities will also be launched for investors who do not have Demat accounts.
- The first launch of Bharat Bond ETF had raised over Rs 12,400 crore from a diverse set of investors. Further, after the new fund offer, the Bharat Bond ETF programme continued to see healthy investor participation and good liquidity on the exchanges.

BSE launches eKYC services on StAR MF platform

- **BSE StAR MF** has launched **BSE eKYC services** based on **Aadhaar** and **Video KYC**.
- Open for onboarding mutual fund investors initially, it will be opened to stock brokers and other approved intermediaries. It will soon issue APIs for stock brokers and other intermediaries to connect their IT systems to BSE's eKYC system, it stated.
- The user-friendly web and mobile interface for different participants of MF industry provides digital verification of KYC documents, integration with KRA systems and real-time approval in case of successful verification of all IDs and documents.
- This apart, the software is compatible with various web browsers and operating systems and will eliminate the current challenges of onboarding a new investor, stated BSE StAR MF.
- Ganesh Ram, Business Head — Mutual Funds, BSE, stated the new eKC service will go a long way in improving the experience of onboarding investors in a seamless manner.
- With the superior systems, it will bring in more operational efficiency by reducing error-prone and time-consuming human efforts besides reducing the investor acquisition cost, he added.

Aspiring Chartered Accountants Launch India's First Chat-Based 'JJ Tax App'

- Aspiring chartered accountants **Mehak Malik** and **Leesha Arya** teamed up to launch **JJ Tax App – a chat-based tax app**. This app offers a wide range of solutions in taxation and allied services to customers, offering real-time solutions by tax experts.
- With the motto of '**Done Fast Done Right**', this team is all set to simplify taxation for new-age millennials, who prefer online communication rather than face-to-face meetings with tax experts.
- It is particularly relevant in the present scenario of social distancing measures, where digital solutions are fast-replacing the traditional in-person meetings across all industries.
- This app has a secured platform, and is a one-stop solution for diverse customer segments, not just from India but also overseas. JJ Tax offers 5 memberships, as per taxation requirements, which include Silver for those with salary and other income up to Rs. 25 lakhs, Gold for those with income above Rs. 25 lakhs but without GST registration, Platinum for businesses with GST registration, Dollar for Non-residents who can also reap benefits of this app through this membership and Diamond for Non-individuals.
- The next phase of development in the app will introduce multi-lingual support, digital voice assistants, and a host of online tax-related classes and subjects

GDP to contract by 5% in FY21: Crisil

- Rating agency **Crisil** expects India's economy to shrink by **5%** during the current financial year as the nationwide lockdown crippled economic activity.
- This is despite agriculture acting as a cushion. The non-farm growth rate is seen to contract by 6% with agricultural activity providing a cushion with an estimated growth of **2.5%**

- CRISIL stated it expected the current quarter's GDP to shrink **25 per cent** year on year.
- In its latest report, CRISIL stated it would really be a long road to recovery and going back to the pre-Covid-19 trend level of gross domestic product (GDP) in India will not be possible for the next three fiscal years.
- The lockdown extension, higher economic costs, and an economic package that lacked muscle are the three key reasons why CRISIL has downgraded the GDP forecast.

Indian economy to shrink by 5 per cent during FY21, says S&P

- In line with various agencies, **S&P Global Ratings** estimated that the Indian economy will register de-growth of **5 per cent** during fiscal year **2020-21 (FY21)**, ending March 31. However, for next three years, it forecasts growth rate between **6.5 to 8.5 per cent**.
- In its research report, SBI stated that FY21 GDP (de) growth would be now around **negative 6.8 per cent**. Ind-Ra's forecast varies from a growth of **1.9 per cent** to a contraction of 2.1 per cent for FY21.
- CRISIL, in its latest report, expected India's GDP growth to fall off a cliff, and contract **5 per cent** in fiscal 2021.

Important Business News

Fintech firm HAPPY launches 'Lockdown Loan' to tide over Covid-19 crisis

- **HAPPY**, a **machine learning-based MSME digital lender**, has launched the '**lockdown loan**'. The company came up with the initiative as it believes that the global coronavirus outbreak has also impacted about one-fourth of India's 69 million MSMEs at present and the lending will help the affected microenterprises with seamless liquidity access.
- The company stated that the digital credit facility is developed to address the working capital woes of Indian micro enterprises during the lockdown period. It claimed that it will empower borrowers with easy capital access to **Rs.25,000** and **Rs.50,000** with bullet repayment after 6 months.
- The ML-based lender has further strengthened the offering with Covid-19 protection insurance, wherein a full loan waiver is extended to the coronavirus infected.
- The digital lending platform further stated that it has proactively interacted with nearly 300 MSMEs via a survey to understand their sentiments and pain points. The Lockdown Loan was designed and developed basis the survey results to empower the micro-entrepreneurs during these difficult times.

E-commerce platform launches QR-based contactless payments solution

- **Gurgaon-based O2O commerce platform DOT** is striving to tap the **\$1 trillion retail market** in India through a host of merchant and consumer-focused commerce solutions. The platform has launched a **QR-based contactless commerce and payment solution**.
- This will enable 2500 retailers to resume business recovery fast by eliminating all high touch elements in the retail environment and ensuring minimal human contact. This will help retailers regain customer trust and ensure footfalls again post the nationwide lockdown, DOT claimed.
- The contactless retail solution by DOT claims to allow the shoppers to scan a QR code by using the mobile phone camera and get access to catalogues of retail brands and menus of restaurants on a browser.
- They will be similar to an e-commerce page or online restaurant's menu that can be added to the cart. Retail customers can then choose to go inside the store and pick the pre-selected order whereas diners can do contactless ordering through their mobile browser while seated at the table.

- Contactless payments can be made through preferred modes (credit, debit cards, net-banking, UPI, wallets, etc.). Meanwhile, at the back-end, retailers can integrate their order management system or with DOT to manage the inventory.

Vista Equity Partners to invest Rs 11,367 crore in Jio platforms for 2.32% stake

- Private equity firm **Vista Equity Partners** will invest **Rs11,367 crore** in **Jio Platforms** for a **2.32%** stake, the **third deal** after **Facebook** and **Silver Lake's** share acquisition plans over the last two weeks.
- Vista will become the largest investor in Jio Platforms after RIL and Facebook. Facebook would invest **\$5.7 billion** in Jio Platforms for a **9.99% stake**.
- US private equity firm **Silver Lake** will invest Rs 5,655.75 crore (**\$747 million**) in Jio Platforms for a **1.15% stake**.
- Vista is the world's largest exclusively tech-focused private equity fund, and has over \$57 billion in capital commitments and 20 years of investments exclusively in enterprise software and technology companies.
- Reliance Industries announced that US-based private equity firm General Atlantic will invest Rs 6,598.38 crore for a 1.34 per cent stake in Jio Platforms. That marked Jio Platforms' fourth major deal with a US-based technology investor within a month, following investments from internet major Facebook and private equity companies Silver Lake and Vista Equity Partners.
- Private equity giant KKR will buy 32% stake in Jio Platforms for Rs11,367 crore.
- The latest transaction gives Jio Platforms an equity valuation of 4.91 trillion and an enterprise value of Rs5.16 trillion.

Tata Consumer Products ties up with Domino's, Zomato to deliver essential goods

- **Tata Consumer Products (TCPL)** stated it has partnered with food delivery platforms like **Domino's Pizza** and **Zomato** to strengthen its direct distribution model and ensure steady supply of its **essential products**.
- The partnerships leverage complementary strengths to ensure essential products reach the doorsteps of consumers who need them, he stated.
- These channel partnerships have been done in a phased manner, with **Flipkart** being the first e-commerce platform to enable the availability of its essential products in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi.
- On Domino's Pizza app, this service will be available under "Domino's Essentials" for consumers in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata.
- Zomato is currently operational in over 60 cities pan-India enabling Tata Consumer's products to reach consumers across the country.
- In an alternate distribution model, Tata Consumer Products' distributors will list as marketplace sellers on Flipkart, Domino's Pizza, Zomato and other platforms.
- Additionally, Tata Consumer Products has also started the delivery of its food products through its own nutrition and e-commerce platform, Tata NutriKorner, in two phases.

Consumer Affairs dept partners with 2 startups to power 'Suraksha Store initiative'

- **Department of Consumer Affairs** has partnered with tech startups **Safejob** and **Seekify** to use technology to prevent the spread of Covid-19 at the local **Kirana store level**. The Suraksha Store initiative is designed for the health and safety of the citizens during and after the lockdown, as per the companies' joint release.
- The primary objective of this project is to educate Kirana store owners across the country about the Covid-19 safety guidelines and protocols required to be followed while running their businesses.
- The protocols were decided by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and included norms around social distancing and hygiene at all retail outlets.

- The objective was to allow consumers to use the Aarogya Setu app to find a Suraksha Store near them and shop, companies mentioned.
- Seekify, a Sequoia's Surge funded company, has developed an online learning software. They partnered with Safejob to build a custom solution for registering Kirana store owners, their employees, capturing their location, and allowing them to complete online training and certification - all on mobile. The solution is optimized for rural and low bandwidth areas.
- Safejob, an NSDC partner and training expert, was able to develop and deploy training material in eight languages as well as an assessment to ensure that they can be certified to be aware of the Suraksha norms.
- The initiative was successful in registering more than 5 lakh stores within a week of launch. Currently, over 7 lakh retailers have enrolled for this training and over 70K Kirana employees have completed the awareness training, the companies claimed.

IBM ties up with Intellect Design Arena to launch cloud services for banks, financial institutions

- Banking and insurance products company **Intellect Design Arena Ltd** and **IBM** have collaborated to launch the Intellect **iTurmeric FinCloud** on IBM's public cloud.
- iTurmeric FinCloud — a Cloud-ready, API-first, microservices-based platform — enables banks and financial institutions to progressively modernise while ensuring business continuity without the risk of rip and replacement, He declined to give any numbers citing the quiet period before the financial results are announced.
- IBM is one of the first independent software vendors and Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) providers to on-board Intellect's offerings to the IBM financial services-ready public cloud, says a joint press release.
- By offering iTurmeric FinCloud on IBM financial services-ready public cloud, Intellect extends its presence in advanced and emerging economies by offering financial institutions innovative cloud-based solutions to accelerate their digital transformation journey, added Jain.

Infosys Selected as the Digital Transformation Partner for GLOBALFOUNDRIES' Digital Leadership Program

- **Infosys**, a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting, has been selected by **GLOBALFOUNDRIES® (GF®)**, the world's leading specialty foundry, as its partner for the company's **Digital Transformation program**.
- Through this partnership, Infosys will provide expertise and analytical solutions to optimize the overall efficiency and agility of GF's manufacturing and business operations.
- The partnership will enable GF to seamlessly transform its legacy solutions and adopt advanced cloud capabilities to rationalize existing workloads, thereby realizing GF's digital strategy through process automation while achieving lower cost of ownership and ensuring compliance requirements.
- It will also help GF derive value and insights from the data generated across its globally dispersed operations. GF will leverage Infosys' domain expertise and industry experience to transform and optimize GF's IT assets to scale its digital capabilities. Infosys will also enable GF's internal teams with next-gen digital skills to help co-deliver great user experiences across the enterprise.

FSS launches eFinclusiv AEPS 2.0

- Digital payments player **FSS (Financial Software and Systems)** announced the launch of **eFinclusiv AEPS 2.0**, which is expected to strengthen last-mile banking services.

- Amidst the transforming dynamics of the global pandemic, FSS eFinclusiv AEPS 2.0 is aimed at enabling **digital financial service providers** offer secure, low-cost financial tools that expand the usage of digital banking products across diverse customer groups, and moderate and low-income segments in particular,” it stated.
- The move comes amidst significant growth in transactions through **Aadhaar-enabled payment system** with the government releasing cash subsidy to help beneficiaries in the lockdown.
- **FSS eFinclusiv 2.0** has new features for digital financial service providers and customers, including UPI to withdraw funds, it stated.
- Customers will not have to carry cards or recall their Aadhaar number anymore as banking correspondents who have a micro-ATM can initiate a withdrawal request on behalf of the customer by entering the UPI virtual private address and PIN, it stated.
- Customers will also be able to view their bank account balance before confirming the payment, and the money is instantly debited from their account, giving them a real-time view of their available finances, it added.

Flipkart ties up with Bajaj Allianz General Insurance for digital motor cover

- **Flipkart** and **Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company** have partnered to offer a digital motor insurance policy to customers of the e-commerce major.
- Consumers can buy this motor-insurance policy using their Flipkart app, it stated in a statement.
- Bajaj Allianz General Insurance also offers mobile insurance on Flipkart
- With the introduction of motor-insurance, consumers can now get access to a much more seamless, accessible and flexible insurance solution to safeguard their vehicles.

Facebook launches 'Shops' for Facebook and Instagram

- **Facebook** launched Facebook **shops**, a new e-commerce venture to help **small businesses**.
- The feature allows businesses to set up storefronts on Facebook and Instagram for free.
- These will be powered by third-party eCommerce services such as Shopify, BigCommerce, and Woo.
- The feature is to help small businesses amid the ongoing economic crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a recent survey conducted by Facebook and the Small Business Roundtable, one-third of small businesses in the United States have stopped operations while 11 per cent expect to shut shop in the next three months if the situation remains the same.
- The social media giant earlier this month had also launched a range of new feature across platforms to help small businesses.
- Businesses are facing immense challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, and supporting them is critical to the well-being of entrepreneurs, communities and the economy, Facebook had stated.
- We're announcing new ways for people to support and discover small businesses, along with more tools for keeping businesses informed and connected with their customers, it had stated.
- The features included a new 'Support Small Business sticker' for Instagram, a Businesses Nearby section for its Facebook app and upgrades on the Business Inbox in Messenger.

Salman Khan Launches His Own Grooming and Personal Care Brand 'FRSH'

- **Actor Salman Khan** has recently launched his own grooming and personal care brand **FRSH** and starts from selling sanitisers because it is very essential to do sanitisation and as per the need of the hour, sanitiser is their first product to enter the market.

- The brand has been co-created by Scentials Beauty Care and Wellness Pvt. Ltd, a beauty brand co-founded by former tennis professional Mahesh Bhupathi.
- The first product launched under the brand is a sanitiser, considering the importance of hygiene and sanitisation during the coronavirus pandemic. Other products like deodorants, body wipes and perfumes will also be launched soon.
- These products can be purchased from <http://frshworld.com>. He already owns an apparel brand under Being Human – The Salman Khan Foundation.

Fintech startup Zaggie ties up with Visa for innovative payments solutions for SMEs

- **Fintech startup Zaggie** has partnered with payments technology major **Visa** to launch innovative payment solutions for SMEs and startups.
- Under this partnership, both the companies will jointly create solutions for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups to improve productivity, efficiency and automate processes and reduce costs along with focusing on easy and faster credit through a unique card which will have forex, prepaid along with credit.
- Zaggie will leverage Visa's expertise in the payments space to co-create and build new solutions for SMEs and will also be able to acquire new customers and merchants and get the latter's support for newer technological innovations and ideas.
- One such innovation is the '**Founders Card**', a credit card, which Zaggie is planning to launch founders and CEOs of SMEs and startups in the next 45-60 days.

Bengaluru-based startup launches collection VoiceBot for BFSI customers

- **Gnani.ai**, an **artificial intelligence (AI)** startup announced the launch of "**Gnani Collection VoiceBot**", a multilingual **conversational voice bot**. The Gnani Collection VoiceBot enables an intelligent dialogue between customers and the financial institution using voice assistants on telephony lines, as per the company's official release.
- Gnani stated that the collection VoiceBot is built with an aim to leverage the latest AI technologies to help **BFSI customers digitise manual** collection processes. This can be done by using bots to automate customer support calls, manage outbound call campaigns, and push the payments online modes, away from manual payment collection.
- The Gnani Collection VoiceBot can address any query on telephony lines be it from a feature phone or a smartphone and in multiple languages, the Bengaluru-based company mentioned.
- The current uncertain environment and the lockdown across the country have impacted insurance renewals, credit loan EMI payments, and credit card payments.
- **Gnani.ai's** multilingual conversational AI is helping financial institutions tide over the problem.
- The Gnani Collection VoiceBot on telephone lines uses conversational AI to have an intelligent conversation with the customer, answering her queries, understand topics such as the RBI moratorium process, and helping her make payments, the startup noted.

Adidas hosts global virtual sports event to fight COVID-19

- Top Indian athletes including Rohit Sharma, Hima Das, Nikhat Zareen, Manpreet Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Dipika Pallikal, Simranjit Kaur and Mirabai Chanu have come together to participate in **world's largest virtual sports event**.
- The **#HOMETEAMHERO** Challenge is a sporting event for the world's athletes & creators to unite and help make a difference by dedicating their workouts to the community heroes who keep the world's essential services moving.

- The challenge will be live from May 29-June 7. For every hour of activity logged on the apps, **Adidas** will donate **USD 1** to **WHO Covid-19 Relief Fund**, on the participants' behalf. One can simply participate by downloading the Adidas Running or Adidas Training app(s) and log in their activities, Adidas mentioned in its official release.
- As part of the campaign, a series of specially curated challenges will be live within Adidas' Running & Training apps. Athletes such as cricketers Rohit Sharma & Kuldeep Yadav, track sprinter Hima Das & boxers Nikhat Zareen & Simranjit Kaur have urged the masses to sign up and join them to participate in this ultimate donation relay, which aims to raise USD 1 million for the WHO Covid-19 Relief Fund.
- To bring together people from all walks of life, the challenge is built on the collaboration between multiple activity tracking apps like – Garmin, Zwift, Polar, and Suunto where people can connect their regular workouts to Adidas' apps to contribute towards this cause.
- A number of activities are include cycling, walking, strength training, aerobics, treadmill, soccer, basketball, boxing, and tennis, among others.

Important State Wise National News

Andhra Pradesh

AP government to release Rs.905 crore in dues to MSMEs, waive power charges for April, May

- **Andhra Pradesh government** has waived the **minimum power charges** for all **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** for April and May in view of the lockdown.
- The government has also stated it will release all pending dues to MSMEs which have not been paid from 2014-15, amounting to **Rs.905 crore**, in two tranches. In addition, **Rs.200 crore** will be provided as input capital to the firms at low-interest rates.
- With these decisions, over 72,531 micro enterprises and 24,252 small and 645 medium scale industries are going to be benefited, which would eventually create employment for about 9,68,269 people, stated the release. The State government will support the textile industry and other enterprises based on the Centre's decisions, it added.

Andhra CM launches app to monitor agriculture needs of farmers

- **Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy** launched an app '**CMAPP (Comprehensive Monitoring of Agriculture, Price, and Procurement)**', a mobile application to monitor the **agriculture needs of farmers**.
- During a review meeting on marketing intelligence, the Chief Minister stated that the mobile application will display data relating to the cost, procurement, and marketing facilities of the farmers for their agriculture produce.
- The Chief Minister instructed the officials to monitor and review agriculture conditions including the sale and procurement of crops at the village level on a daily basis.

AP to help revive MSMEs with Rs.1,110-cr 'ReSTART' package

- Factoring the hardships faced by the **MSMEs** during the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Andhra Pradesh** government has come up with a **Rs.1,110-crore 'ReSTART'** policy boost.
- This is to provide some relief at a time when the economy has come to a standstill, severely affecting the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands dependent on MSME sector. In Andhra Pradesh alone, around one lakh MSMEs provide employment to more than 10 lakh people.
- The ReSTART package includes the payment of all sanctioned but outstanding incentives to MSME units, waiver of three months fixed demand charges, deferment of power minimum demand charges for three months for large and mega units, and working capital loans along with preferential market access.

- The ReSTART Policy will include the release of Rs.905 crore of pending incentives to MSME units in two months, waive fixed demand charges towards power for a period of three months from April 20 to June 20 for MSMEs (Rs.188 crore) and provide Rs.200-crore working capital loans by creating a fund to meet their liquidity crisis.
- In addition, it has proposed to defer the payment of fixed power demand charges of Rs.17 crore for the same period to all large and mega industries without interest or penal charges

Assam

National Board for Wildlife Permits Coal Mining in Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve in Assam

- **National Board for Wildlife** has recommended that part of **98.59 hectares reserve forest land** that is a part of **Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve** be used for opencast coal mining by North-Eastern Coal Field of Coal India Limited while the rest of the area may be considered for underground coal mining.
- The proposal of locating the coal mine inside the reserve was considered during the 54th meeting of the board on July 18 last year when it was decided that a **committee** comprising noted elephant expert and member of **NBWL**, **Professor R Sukumar**, a representative of the wildlife division and the state chief wildlife warden of Assam would visit the site and submit a report to the ministry.
- 57.02 hectares of forest land has already been used for mining by Coal India Limited and that in the balance 41.39 hectares of unbroken area a cautious approach needs to be adopted owing to the rich biodiversity

Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh to launch Rajiv Gandhi Nyay Yojana for farmers on May 21, former PM's death anniversary

- **Chhattisgarh** is set to launch the **Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana** in the state to **encourage farmers** to produce more crops and help them get the right price for it.
- The scheme will see a sum of **Rs 5,700 crore** being transferred directly to the accounts of **19 lakh farmers** of the state in four instalments.
- Chief Minister **Bhupesh Baghel** will formally launch the scheme in the state through a video conference on May 21, the death anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, an official statement stated.
- The Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana has been launched to encourage farmers for increasing crop production in the state and provide them the right price for their produce, it stated.
- In order to encourage farmers to cultivate crops, the state government, will provide paddy and maize cultivating farmers assistance with the rate of maximum Rs 10,000 per acre in a proportionate manner from Kharif 2019 season, depending on the quantity acquired through cooperative society, the statement stated.
- Under this scheme 18,34,834 farmers will be provided Rs 1,500 crore as first instalment for paddy crop.
- Similarly, for sugarcane crop, payment of FRP amount of Rs 261 per quintal and incentive and input support, amounting to Rs 93.75 per quintal, i.e. maximum Rs 355 per quintal, will be made depending on the quantity of sugarcane purchased by the cooperative mill in the crushing year 2019-20.
- Under this, 34,637 farmers of the state will get Rs 73 crore 55 lakh in four instalments and the first instalment of this amount, Rs 18,43 crore will be transferred on May 21.

Chhattisgarh to observe May 25 as Jhiram tribute day

- The **Chhattisgarh government** will observe **May 25** as '**Jhiram Shraddhanjali Diwas**' to pay tribute to Congress leaders who were killed in a Maoist attack in Bastar district on this day in 2013 as well as other victims of Naxal violence.
- May 25 will be observed in the memory of senior Congress leaders and security personnel killed in **Jhiram Valley Naxal attack** on May 25, 2013.
- On May 25, 2013, Naxals had attacked a convoy of Congress leaders during the party's rally in Jhiram valley, killing 29 people, including then state Congress chief Nand Kumar Patel, former leader of opposition Mahendra Karma and former Union minister Vidyacharan Shukla.

Centre approves Rs. 445 cr for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in Chhattisgarh

- Centre has approved **445 crore rupees** for **implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission** in **Chhattisgarh** during **2020-21**. The aim of the mission is to provide **adequate potable drinking water** of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis to every rural household of the country by the **2024**.
- Jal Shakti Ministry stated, a budget of **three lakh 60 thousand Crore rupees** has been allocated for this scheme. The Ministry stated, Chhattisgarh has planned to have 100 Per cent Functional Tap Water Connection by 2023-24. Out of 45 lakh households in the State, it has planned to provide tap connections to 20 lakh households.
- Chhattisgarh has been battling with the issue of rapid ground water depletion and chemical contamination of Arsenic, Fluoride and Iron in water since many years.
- The Ministry stated, with summers in full swing and country grappling with COVID-19 pandemic, it has become more imperative to provide livelihood to the migrant workers who have returned to their native villages.
- These migrant labourers are basically skilled and semi-skilled ones, whose services could be effectively utilized in villages by providing jobs related to water supply especially plumbing, fitting and water conservation works.

Delhi

Delhi police Commissioner launches initiative Ayuraksha- 'Corona se jung - Delhi Police ke sang'

- **Delhi police** Commissioner **S N Shrivastava** launched **Ayuraksha- 'Corona se jung - Delhi Police ke sang'**, a joint initiative by Delhi Police and **All India Institute of Ayurveda, Ministry of AYUSH**.
- The Ayurveda institute will maintain the health of front line COVID warriors like Delhi Police personnel through Ayurveda Immunity boosting measures. It will be implemented in a phase wise manner. The distribution will take place for nearly 80 thousand personnel of Delhi Police across 15 districts.
- He stated around 50 police personnel have been hit by this virus as their duties require presence in the general public, including vulnerable places like hospitals, containment zones and quarantine centres.
- He expressed his gratitude to Ministry of AYUSH for this unique initiative which will help policemen to keep themselves safe and secure from this virus. Immunity Booster Kits were distributed to Delhi Police Personnel on this occasion.

Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh govt to launch 'Nigah' to aware family members of migrant returnees

- In **Himachal pradesh**, the state government is planning to launch a new programme **Nigah**, in order to sensitize and educate the **family members of the people coming to the state** from other parts of the country.

- Under this programme Asha, health and anganwadi workers would be deployed to create general awareness in maintaining **social distancing** during **home quarantine**.
- Under the Nigah programme a team of ASHA, health and Anganwadi workers would sensitize the family members of persons arriving from other States regarding the importance of social distancing, so that they could be saved from any possible infection.
- Chief Minister Jairam Thakur stated the residence of such persons who recently returned to the state from other states must be properly labeled.
- He stated members of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies must ensure that such persons do not jump from home quarantine.

Karnataka

Bengaluru launches Pranavayu programme to create awareness on need to self examine respiratory health

- There are 21 containment zones in the city where Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is mandated to carry out quarantine and surveillance activities along with identifying persons prone to the deadly corona virus infection. In this regard, the city corporation has launched **Pranavayu programme** to create awareness on the need to **self examine the respiratory health** for Bangaloreans.
- **Pranavayu programme** launched by the **City Corporation in Bengaluru** has been creating awareness through advertisements in media about the need to carry out self examination for early detection of any ailment that could aggravate the situation if contracted with the viral infection.
- Several deaths due to COVID-19 are reported due to Severe Acute Respiratory illness or SARI. Pranavayu awareness programme is an attempt to help people with low oxygen level in their blood to get themselves checked early before their ailments become fatal.

Karnataka launches incubator for cyber security startups in India

- **Karnataka** launched its **first cyber security-specific accelerator** programme 'H.A.C.K' for start-ups recently.
- This comes even at a time when there are serious discussions around surveillance and lack of safety through government-run online software for COVID-19.
- The programme is implemented by **CySeck**, which is state's CoE (Centre of Excellence) in Cyber Security meant for creating a cyber-safe environment for industry collaboration. It is housed at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.
- An independent panel that comprises of members from the government, academia, industry practitioners and investor community evaluates applications from start-ups.
- The accelerator programme already has 21 start-ups on board, stated a release from IISc, and these are divided into three cohorts namely '10x cohort', '0-1 cohort' and 'virtual cohort'.

Karnataka govt to launch a project to maintain health database of all citizens

- **Karnataka government** will soon launch a project to maintain the **health database** of all its citizens. A first of its kind initiative **State Health Register** will be a robust and standardized health repository of all the citizens.
- Dr Sudhakar stated that Covid-19 experience has demonstrated the necessity of having robust, real-time public health data and therefore, there is a need to maintain repository of health data of each and every citizen.
- He stated that Government will be undertaking a survey of all 6.5 Crore people in the state using a team of Primary Health Centre officials, revenue officials, Education department staff and ASHA karyakartas. They will visit each household and collect health data of all the members of the family.

- This will not only help the government to provide better health care, but will also help efficient resource allocation, management and better implementation of various citizen centric schemes in the state, the Minister added.

Gujarat

Gujarat-based Macpower unveils indigenous hot air seam sealing machine for PPE kits

- Rajkot-based **Macpower CNC** has produced the country's first indigenous **hot air seam sealing machine** that is used to manufacture PPE kits at half the price of the imported ones.
- The machine, manufactured with the guidance of doctors at Indian Medical Association (IMA), was unveiled by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.
- The device is used to seal the seam of the personal protection equipment (PPE) kits so that viruses cannot penetrate from the small pores and infect the person.
- The machine is important for manufacturing of PPE kits for coronavirus warriors fighting to treat those affected by COVID-19.
- In the first batch, the company will manufacture 200 units of the machine at Rs 4 lakh.

Gujarat CM announces Aatmanirbhar Gujarat Sahay Yojana

- In **Gujarat**, Chief Minister **Vijay Rupani** announced **Aatmanirbhar Gujarat Sahay Yojana**. The scheme for small shop keepers and self-employed hit by the lockdown.
- Under the scheme, **one lakh rupees collateral free loan** will be given at **two per cent** for the beneficiaries for three years.
- CM Vijay Rupani stated the beneficiaries will have to make only one application to avail the loan from state and District Cooperative Banks and credit agencies.
- They won't have to pay any installment during the moratorium period for the first six months. He stated the State Government will pay the rest six per cent interest to the banks. There won't be any processing fees for the loans. Over 10 lakh self-employed people, small traders shop keepers will be benefited from the scheme.
- Meanwhile, the CM has also requested the centre to initiate the procurement of cotton through CCI at the minimum support price.

Haryana

Haryana gears up to provide tap connections to all rural households by December, 2022

- **Haryana** is geared to provide **tap water connection to all** rural households by **December, 2022**. The State provided **1.05 lakh tap connections** during **2019-20** under the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**.
- Now the State Government is planning **100% coverage by December, 2022**, ahead of the national goal by 2024-25. By doing so, Haryana will be among the leading states to accomplish the ambitious target of providing tap connection to each rural household.
- **Dashboard of Public Health Engineering Department (PHED)** has been recently launched by Chief Minister. It's a dynamic platform, wherein the details of villages, tap connections, financial progress, etc. is monitored on real time basis.
- Government of India is implementing the '**Jal Jeevan Mission**' (JJM) in partnership with States to ensure every rural household in the country has **FHTC for drinking water in adequate quantity** of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis at affordable service delivery charges leading to improvement in their living standards.

Himachal Pradesh

HP govt to launch employment scheme for urban areas

- **Himachal Pradesh government** decided to launch a programme “**Mukhya Mantri Shahari Rojgar Guarantee Yojna**” guaranteeing at least **120 days' employment** to the those living in urban areas.
- They have vast experience and expertise in various fields. They will be identified and trained accordingly to provide them employment and self-employment avenues.
- The cabinet also decided to provide an assistance of Rs 2,000 to each of the one lakh workers registered under the Building and Other Construction Workers Board.
- It was also decided to waive electricity demand charges of the tourism industry for six months, thereby providing them a relief of about Rs 15 crore.
- Similarly, excise and taxation licence fee will be waived and the lifting quota of bars will be on a pro-rata basis.
- It was also decided to help Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) in paying salaries of its employees.

Jammu & Kashmir

Kashmir saffron gets GI tag

- **Kashmir saffron**, which is cultivated and harvested in the **Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir**, has been given the **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag by the Geographical Indications Registry. The spice is grown in some regions of Kashmir, including Pulwama, Budgam, Kishtwar and Srinagar.
- Kashmir saffron is renowned globally as a spice. It rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics and for medicinal purposes. It has been associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.
- The unique characteristics of Kashmir saffron are its longer and thicker stigmas, natural deep-red colour, high aroma, bitter flavour, chemical-free processing, and high quantity of crocin (colouring strength), safranal (flavour) and picrocrocin (bitterness).
- It is the only saffron in the world grown at an altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m AMSL (above mean sea level), which adds to its uniqueness and differentiates it from other saffron varieties available the world over.
- Saffron cultivation is believed to have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants around 1st Century BCE. In ancient Sanskrit literature, saffron is referred to as 'bahukam'.

J&K Govt has launched portal for J&K people stranded in other parts of country

- **Jammu & Kashmir Government** has launched a web portal <http://jkmonitoring.nic.in/> to facilitate its **residents stranded** in other parts of the country.
- The portal enables giving to those registered and also allows a person to check his application status. All those who have registered online using the links opened by the J&K Government earlier need not register again.
- The web portal has already been with the details of the persons who have already registered through www.jktpo.in. All those who have registered can track the progress of their application.
- Arrangements are being made for trains from various stations across the country. In addition to the web portal, in order to assist the returnees and address their concerns, a dedicated 24X7 Covid-19 Helpline number 0191-2466988 has been activated, returnees can obtain information of arrangements made for their movement and also get any other information.

- The portal has received more than 2156 plus hits in a span of two hours, almost 50% are for downloading the authorization by the Government of J&K.

J&K promotes e-learning under Samagra Shiksha programme

- In **Jammu and Kashmir**, the Union Territory Administration has initiated a slew of measures under **Samagra Shiksha programme** to facilitate students with complete access to education through technological interventions and other viable means in wake of COVID-19 lockdown.
- These measures include tele-classes on DD Kashir and Local Cable Network, Video Lectures Repository using JK Knowledge Network, Online Classes including Vocational Classes using freely available Applications like Zoom, e-Paathshala and DIKSHA and Created Special WhatsApp Groups for interacting with Children with Special needs through Special Educators. In all, 42 Laptops with Braille Tactile Readers were distributed for Visually Impaired students/persons to freely access internet.
- Online Career Guidance Portal “**Manzelein**” was launched for students in association with **UNICEF** which is a structured and well programmed portal developed to help students in choosing a right career after completing their secondary or higher secondary education. It will have complete information on careers, colleges and 262,000 programmes in 16 countries. About 2,500 Tabs were distributed among students for attending online classes, accessing online content available on e-Pathshala/ DIKSHA and other activities.
- Besides, funds to the tune of 2,030.87 lakh rupees released to Directorates of School Education for purchase and distribution of books to children under elementary level as Right To Education entitlements

J&K starts an initiative SUKOON' - COVID-19 Beat the Stress

- In order to spread awareness about psychological impact of lockdown and measures to be adopted to overcome them, **Department of Information and Public Relations, J&K** has started an initiative ‘**SUKOON' - COVID-19 Beat the Stress**”.
- During which psychiatrists, eminent doctors and scientists will share their knowledge on psychological health and how to keep the mind anxiety free and the measures which people can adopt to keep stress level under control. The aim is to ensure that people stay mentally fit and cope with the fears related to COVID-19 with a sound mind.
- This initiative is in line with the growing concern that COVID-19 pandemic and the prolonged lockdown has resulted in tremendous stress among various sections of the society.
- Parents, care givers and children are the greatest victims of lockdown as they grapple with restricted movement and not being allowed to meet with friends and socialize. DIPR, J&K is also looking at telecasting such programmes on a daily basis to reach out to the people of the UT.

Ladakh

Kargil's first Solar Lift Irrigation Plant inaugurated in Ladakh

- In **Ladakh**, Director of Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries **Dr Mohammad Raza** inaugurated the **first Solar Lift Irrigation Plant of Kargil** with **five KW Solar Plant** and **three HP Submersible Pump** (Kargil Renewable Energy Agency- **KREDA**) at **Yak Breeding Farm, Bodh Kharboo** keeping in view the protocols of social distancing and Standard Operating Procedures.
- This prototype will help others to solve the shortage of water to irrigate, particularly those lands which are at the banks of river. It will also help in solve the drinking water issue as well.

- The Pump is discharging **45,000 Litre water per day** from **Dawn to Desk** which is a great achievement in this sector and soon KREDA will be proposing for more such projects which involves one-time investment which has no recurring cost.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand govt launches three schemes to boost rural employment

- The **Jharkhand government** launched **three schemes** under the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act** in a bid to “revive the rural economy”, affected by the lockdown in view of COVID-19 pandemic.
- The three initiatives launched were the **Birsa Harit Gram Yojana** for **rural plantations**, **Neelambar Pitambar JAL Sammriddhi Yojana** for **water conservation** and the **Poto Ho Khel Vikas Scheme** for **making playgrounds**.
- Under the **Birsa Harit Gram Yojana**, **over two lakh acres of land** will be used for **afforestation**.
Five lakh families would be given nearly 100 fruit-bearing plants, with initial plantation, maintenance, land work and afforestation to be taken up through MNREGA. Each family is estimated to receive an annual income of Rs 50,000 annually from the produce, the third year onwards.
- Under the **Jal Sammriddhi Yojna**, water storage units will be constructed to **store rainwater** and **runaway ground water**. This scheme will primarily implemented in the Palamu division, which faces severe drought.
- Under the **playground scheme**, the government aims to develop **5,000 grounds**, with at least one in one Panchayat. There are around 4,300 panchayats in the state.
- In Birsa Harit Gram Yojna, **Rs 660 crore** will be spent in a year, in which, **Rs 520 crore** will be the only wage component, leading to the creation of employment of 270 lakh person days and assets in 2,20,000 hectares. Under the Jal Yojna, **Rs 1,200 crore** will be spent with 90% being the wage component. For playgrounds, we will develop 1,000 in one year, generating employment of **850 lakh person days**.

Jharkhand: Education dept with Doordarshan starts online classes for School children

- In **Jharkhand**, the **State Education Department** in collaboration with **Doordarshan** started **online classes and educational programs** to provide school education to students of the state through video and thematic lectures.
- The special educational lectures designed for students from class 1 to 12 began with special slots allotted for each class.
- The programme is scheduled to air on the regional DD channel and free Dish TV from morning 10 am to afternoon 2 pm for five days a week everyday from Monday to Friday.
- With schools remaining closed till June 15 due to summer vacations, as per the orders from the state government, post Lockdown period, the new initiative taken up by the School Education Department to educate children through video lectures is a great step.
- Students can study regularly at their home during this lockdown period and can get benefitted of the one hour long subject-wise classes specially designed with the help of teachers aided by UNICEF and state education department.
- Apart from the regional broadcast on Doordarshan these classes will also be available online on YouTube channel of **Doordarshan - DD Jharkhand** and **DIGI SATH** for uninterrupted access by the students as per their convenience.
- The educational programme aims to provide tutorials, clear concepts and impart knowledge to students of higher secondary sections and thematic pictographic video learning programmes for junior section classes.

'Tatpar' Scheme In Ranchi To Transport Migrant Workers

- **'Tatpar' programme** was launched by the **Ranchi district** administration to ease their tiresome journey on foot. Under the programme, officials collect information about those walking on national highways or on any other road to provide them transport facilities.
- They were given masks and food packets. The administration also launched a helpline **1950** for the migrant workers to facilitate **arranging of buses**.

Madhya Pradesh

Unique vehicle "Sanjeevani" developed at local level in Madhya Pradesh

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, in a first of its kind initiative, a **unique vehicle** has been developed at the **local level**. With the help of this vehicle, **health workers** can investigate any suspected patients without coming in to the contact of him. This vehicle has been named **Sanjeevani**.
- This unique vehicle designed at the initiative of Rajnagar administration of Chhatarpur district, is highly useful for health workers.
- Health workers will be able to go inside any area by Sanjeevani vehicle and they can investigate any suspect without getting out of the vehicle.
- Health workers have been infected extensively by Corona virus in Madhya Pradesh.
- Sanjeevani vehicle is also very useful in these situations. PPE kit also won't be required in this vehicle.

MP Home Minister launches country's first ever 'FIR Aapke Dwar' Yojana

- **Madhya Pradesh** Home Minister **Dr Narottam Mishra** launched country's first ever '**FIR Aapke Dwar Yojana**' in **Bhopal**.
- Madhya Pradesh is the first state in the country to implement such an innovative scheme.
- '**FIR Aapke Dwar**' scheme has been started as a pilot project in 23 Police Stations including one urban and one rural Police Station at 11 Divisional Headquarters.
- Dial 100 vehicle would have trained Head Constables to lodge FIR.
- FIRs in complaints of general nature will be lodged on the spot. In case of serious complaints, guidance will be sought from senior officers.
- The first FIR of Sunil Chaturvedi of Jawahar Chowk, Bhopal was lodged by Dial 100.
- The Minister also launched helpline 'Dial 112' on the occasion, to facilitate immediate availability of ambulance, police and fire fighting services wherever needed.

Madhya Pradesh government to pay for education of poor children from Class 1 to PhD

- **Madhya Pradesh** government will bear the education expenses of **children from poor families** under the **Sambal scheme**. The state will pay for the children's education from **Class 1 to PhD**.
- The state government will also pay the fees of private colleges for higher education.
- Sambal scheme is for all the underprivileged classes of the society.
- The scheme was launched by Chouhan and he announced that Rs 1,863 crore was transferred on the first day electronically.
- He also announced that the government is merging '**Super 5000**' scheme with this under which the students from the underprivileged section, who **score the highest marks in Class 12**, will be given an additional amount of **Rs 30,000**.

Madhya Pradesh launches Charan Paduka initiative for migrant labourers

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, in a first of its kind of initiative, **Charan Paduka campaign** has been started for the **migrant labourers** passing through the state. Under this campaign, the migrant labourers going barefoot are being provided **shoes and slippers** to reduce their pain.
- The most notable thing is that this campaign is being conducted by the police at most places.
- The Charan Paduka campaign started from the Rau Police Station of Indore.
- Now this human initiative has spread in many cities of MP including Damoh, Umaria and Sagar.

Rural Livelihood Mission begins Didi Vehicle Service for safe delivery of rural women in Madhya Pradesh

- In the tribal-dominated **Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh**, the women of Rural Livelihood Mission have started **Didi Vehicle Service for rural women for the safe delivery**. This vehicle service is completely free.
- The women of Rural Livelihood Mission have started this service for 29 villages of 10 Gram Panchayats of Petlavad development block of Jhabua.
- At a time of COVID-19 outbreak, when vehicles are not available for free even in cities, Didi vehicle service is proving to be a lifeline for pregnant rural women in tribal areas.

Madhya Pradesh CM to inaugurate 'Everybody will get employment' scheme through video conferencing

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will inaugurate the **'Everybody will get employment' scheme** through video conferencing. Under this scheme, **MNREGA job cards** will be distributed to the labourers.
- The Chief Minister will also hold a discussion with the heads of village administrative committees through video conferencing.
- Additional Chief Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development Manoj Shrivastava informed that the state government is committed to provide employment to migrant labourers and those labourers who have gone out of the state in search of employment, in their village and gram Panchayat area itself.
- For this, a large number of employment oriented activities have been started under MNREGA scheme. New labourers will be engaged in these activities.

Madhya Pradesh CM inaugurates 'Shram Siddhi Abhiyan' to provide jobs to labourers

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan interacted with labourers and Sarpanchs of different districts via video conference after inaugurating **'Shram Siddhi Abhiyan'** under which jobs will be provided to labourers.
- Under **'Shram Siddhi Abhiyan'**, labourers will be registered under **skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled categories** and work will be provided to them accordingly, Shivraj Singh Chouhan stated.
- He requested Sarpanchs to remain alert regarding the COVID-19 situation and spread awareness about it in villages.

MP Govt is preparing database under 'Swamitva' scheme

- The **Madhya Pradesh** Government is preparing a database under the **Swamitva scheme** launched on a pilot basis by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24th April. The scheme aims to provide land ownership rights to people in rural areas.
- On the basis of the database prepared under this scheme, land rights records and property registers of rural settlements will also be prepared at the **panchayat level**.
- The survey work will be done by the Survey of India through the Panchayat and Rural Development and Revenue Department.
- Under the scheme, 10 districts of the state have been selected as pilot projects in the first year. The survey of the remaining 42 districts will be conducted in the second and third years.

- The main goal of the Rural Population Survey Scheme is to prepare the land right records of village properties and to provide ownership to each property owner.
- The benefit of having a rights record will be that it will make it easier to take loans from the bank on the properties.
- The process of family division and transfer of assets will be smooth and family disputes will also be less.
- One of the advantages of this scheme is that the Gram Panchayats will also get the financial resources at the local level.

MP Govt creates 'Rojgar Setu Yojana' to employ migrant workers

- The State Government has created '**Rojgar Setu Yojana**' to **employ migrant workers**, who have come back to the State from other states amid coronavirus-induced lockdown, stated Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.
- CM Chouhan stated State Government is preparing details after surveying **skilled labourers**. They have created '**Rojgar Setu Yojana**' to employ migrant workers, who have come back to the State from other States amid coronavirus-induced lockdown.
- The database are prepared after getting details of skilled labourers. With the help of this description, they will be provided employment in small, cottage industries or factories, he stated.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra becomes first state in country to provide free and cashless insurance premium to people of the state

- **Maharashtra Government** announced that **cent per cent** inclusion of population from the state will be provided free health treatment under the **Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Aarogya Yojana**.
- While making the announcement on the 60th foundation year of the state, Health Minister Rajesh Tope stated, with this Maharashtra has become the first state in the country to provide free and cashless insurance premium to the people of the state.
- **85 per cent of the state's population** was covered under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPJAY) at present and the cover will be extended to the remaining 15 per cent.
- A memorandum was signed to include government, semi- government employees and white ration card holders in the scheme in a bid to prevent private hospitals from overcharging patients, he stated.
- The government has signed a MoU with the **General Insurance Public Sector Association (GIPSA)** for treatment of COVID-19 patients at private hospitals in Pune and Mumbai, he stated.
- Similarly, different packages will be designed for all diseases, to standardise treatment fees.

IIT launches a Covid-19 Test Bus in Mumbai — capable of conducting 5 million tests per month

- **Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) alumni** council launched a COVID-19 test bus to carry out affordable and rapid testing in the dense urban areas of the city.
- The bus is an initiative by the **C19 task force** of IIT alumni council, health department of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), and Krsnaa diagnostics. The bus, according to the official statement, will “**isolate doctors and facilitate large-scale testing during the monsoon.**”
- The IIT alumni council has taken a pro-active approach to support the Government's efforts in fighting the COVID-19 challenge. We have acted swiftly and set-up the IIT C19 task force to channelize the energies of the global IIT alumni for this fight, the official statement stated.

- The COVID-19 test bus is based on “**indigenous technology**” and the “first vehicle of its kind in the world with onboard genetic testing, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technology and contactless sample collection.
- We first carry out a digital chest X-ray which is immediately transmitted via internet to doctors who use AI-powered technology to determine the probability of the person being COVID positive using a high, medium or low scale, Muffazal Lakadawla, chief medical officer of the National Sports Club, stated while explaining the standard operating procedures of the bus.

Maharashtra govt launches online OPD services for people during lockdown

- The state launched online OPD called **e-Sanjivani OPD** (out-patient department) to resolve difficulties faced by citizens in getting health check-ups and counseling as many private clinics are closed due to the lockdown. To avail of e-Sanjivani's services, patients should visit the website **www.esanjeevaniopd.in** and seek expert advice.
- This is a joint venture of the **health department of Central and State Government** and is free of cost.
- Timing of the OPD will be extended in future. Online medical OPD service training has been imparted to 16 medical officers of district hospital from Nanded, Bhandara, Nashik. So far more than 400 patients have been treated through this service, the state Public Health Department stated in a press statement.
- Through this application, a patient from any district of the state can consult with the medical officers of any district on any ailment using computer, laptop or mobile. Discussions with medical authorities can be done through live video conferencing or text messages.

Maharashtra govt approves formation of AYUSH task force

- The Maharashtra **government** has approved the formation of a **task force** which will give recommendations to it to incorporate **AYUSH treatment modalities** specifically for increasing immunity against COVID-19, stated the state medical education and drug department.
- Meanwhile, the AYUSH Ministry and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) are working together on validating four AYUSH formulations against COVID-19.
- **Dr. Tatyrao Lahane**, Director, Medical Education and Research, Maharashtra, will head the task force. The ‘Task force on Ayush for Covid-19’ will consist of 18 members and include a number of ayurveda, homoeopathy and unani practitioners.

India Post Mumbai releases Special Postal Cover dedicated to Migrant Workers

- **India Post, Mumbai** paid tribute to **migrant workers**, by releasing a **Special Postal Cover** dedicated to them at the Bicentennial Hall of the historic Mumbai GPO building.
- The highlight of the event was that, five migrant workers from different sectors were called upon to release the Special Cover.
- There were two workers from the construction sector, a taxi driver, a jewelry craftsman and a tailor, who is stitching masks for the India Post.
- The event took place at a time when, migrant workers, stuck in different parts of the country following the nationwide lockdown, were making efforts to go back to their home states.

'Mee Annapurna' - An Inclusive Program for Welfare of Farmers, Bhoomiputras Launched Across Maharashtra

- Department of Agriculture, Govt. of Maharashtra announced a three year empanelment of insurance companies and intermediaries for implementation of crop insurance scheme across the state. The tender was issued on the guidelines of Revamped **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana**. Post-launch of the guidelines, **Integrated Risk**

Insurance, an IRDA Licensed insurance intermediary, announced '**Mee Annapurna**', an initiative that integrates three critical aspects of livelihood and comprehensive engagement.

- **Mee Annapurna**' initiative revolves around the three commandments - **Expertise, Engagement and Entitlement**.
- They will be providing FREE-OF-COST skill based training to about 1500+ individuals across 35 districts in Maharashtra and give them a sustainable livelihood by engaging them for the activities related to premium collection, verification of documents, crop cutting experiments & audits.

Manipur

Chak-Hao(Manipur black rice) to get GI tag

- **Chak-Hao**, a **scented glutinous rice** which has been in cultivation in Manipur over centuries, is characterised by its **special aroma**. It is normally eaten during community feasts and is served as Chak-Hao kheer.
- According to the GI application filed, this rice takes the longest cooking time of 40-45 minutes due to the presence of a fibrous bran layer and higher crude fibre content.
- At present, the traditional system of Chak-Hao cultivation is practised in some pockets of Manipur.
- Direct sowing of pre-soaked seeds and also transplantation of rice seedlings raised in nurseries in puddled fields are widely practised in the State's wetlands.

Mizoram

Mizoram grants 'industry' status to sports

- The northeastern state of **Mizoram** has accorded '**industry**' status to sports. The Cabinet cleared the Sports and Youth Service department's proposal to recognise sports as an 'industry' in the state. This is a historic decision heard any other state to do this, stated state Sports minister Robert Romawia Royte, adding that the idea was first proposed in 2019 as part of the state sports policy by the ruling Mizo National Front government.
- According to him, the main aim of the decision is to professionalise sports in the state. We need to sustain sports and games and make it more meaningful to players. Gone are the days where sports is just entertainment and enjoyment — it needs to be more than that so that players can earn a livelihood out of it, he stated.
- Mizoram is known for its love for sports — especially football which is played competitively through the Mizoram Premier League, the state's highest football league. At least 100 Mizo players are part of the Indian Super League, one of the top premier football leagues in India.

Punjab

Punjab govt promulgates 'Punjab Good Conduct Prisoners Amendment Ordinance, 2020'

- Punjab Government promulgated '**The Punjab Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Amendment Ordinance, 2020**'. As per new provisions, the temporary release of the prisoners has been allowed beyond the maximum period of 16 weeks in a calendar year.
- Disclosing this at Chandigarh, Cooperation and Jails Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa stated that the step has been taken in view of containing the spread of COVID-19, with the intention to decongest the jails.
- The Minister further added that the condition of the temporary release being availed of, on quarterly basis also stands waived.

Rajasthan

Rajasthan-based company develops robots to screen people amid Covid-19

- A Jaipur-based company has developed robots to help health workers in conducting a **thermal screening** of the people amid Covid-19 crisis. These robots can also identify if a person is **wearing a mask** or not.
- The robot which is 95 per cent made in India is the first in the world to be based on **spine technology**.
- It is the world's first robot that is based on spine technology which helps robot balance anything it handles. The robot doesn't follow any line or magnetic path, it self-navigates,.
- The robot can do thermal screening, it can also identify if a person is wearing a mask or not, Mishra added.

Sikkim

Sikkim CM launches portal to gather public feedback and suggestions on govt schemes

- Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang launched the www.sikkimgovtfeedback.org portal developed by the state **Information and Public relations (IPR)** Department to gather public feedback and suggestions on government schemes and general administration at **Gangtok**.
- Mr Tamang stated that the mechanism established through the portal would ensure transparency in functioning of the government by providing an interface with the people.
- Inputs received from the public will be documented and screened by officials for further forwarding to respective departments for necessary action.

Tamil Nadu

Kovilpatti kadalai mittai to get GI tag

- The famous **Kovilpatti kadalai mittai** has been granted the **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag.
- The application was filed by the Kovilpatti Regional Kadalaimittai Manufacturers.
- Kovilpatti kadalai mittai is manufactured in **Kovilpatti** and **adjacent towns and villages in Thoothukudi district**.
- Kovilpatti kadalai mittai is a candy made of peanuts held together with glistening syrup, and topped with wisps of grated coconut dyed pink, green and yellow.
- Kovilpatti kadalai mittai is produced by using both groundnuts and jaggery (organic jaggery), in carefully selected quantities from selected specific locations in **Tamil Nadu**. The groundnuts are grown in the native black soil in and around Kovilpatti.

TN state government employees retirement age increased

- **Tamil Nadu** government has increased the **retirement age of State Government employees** to **59** from **58**.
- This will also apply to all teachers in government and government-aided schools and colleges, and in State public sector undertakings.
- Government sources stated retiring employees would have to be paid provident fund, gratuity and other payments.
- This entire burden is being postponed for one year as the government has lost huge revenue due to the lockdown, in force to curb the spread of COVID-19. The order comes to force with immediate effect.

Tamil Nadu forms panel under ex-RBI Gov Rangarajan to advise measures to bring economy back on track

- **Tamil Nadu government** decided to set up **high-level committee** of economists and experts headed by **R Rangarajan**, former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor and ex-chairman of Prime Minister's economic advisory

council, to advise the state government on the medium-term policy response in the wake serious economic and fiscal challenges triggered by the covid-19 pandemic.

- The committee will include industry veterans like Venu Srinivasan, chairman, TVS motor company, N Srinivasan, vice-chairman & MD, India cements and A Vellayan, former chairman of Murugappa group. Indian bank MD & CEO, Padmaja Chunduru, P N Vasudevan, MD & CEO, Equitas Small Finance Bank, M Govinda Rao, member 14th finance commission, and K R Shanmugam, director, Madras School of Economics are the other prominent members of the committee, among others.
- The terms of reference of the panel include: access the overall immediate and medium-term impact of the covid-19 pandemic on different sectors of Tamil Nadu's economy, including the impact of lockdown, additional costs and implications due to social distancing and other precautionary measures. It will access the opportunities and threats in short and medium terms.
- The panel will formulate measures required to help the important sectors of the economy to overcome the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It will identify the specific reform measures to be taken the state government to support and promote the growth of important sectors of the economy.

GI tag for Thanjavur Netti and Arumbavur Wood carving

- After a seven-year-long wait, the **Thanjavur Netti Works** (pith works) and **Arambavur Wood Carvings** belonging to the **central region of Tamil Nadu** were awarded the **Geographical Indication Tag** by the GI registry.
- The Geographical Indication tag is granted to products that the special for a particular geographical area and prevents misuse of the popularity of the products by others.
- Thanjavur Netti Works (Thanjavur Pith Work) is made from Netti (pith) from a marshy plant called as Aeschynomene Aspera. This is a traditional art form and has been transferred from one generation to the next.
- The Netti Works are widely found in the Brihadeeshwara Temple, Hindu Idols, Garlands, door hangings and decorative pieces. The government has recognised the pith work industry as one of the major handicraft symbols.
- Similarly, the **Arumbavur wood** carvings by the artisans of Perambalur are primarily made out of the wooden logs of, Mango, Lingam tree, Indian Ash tree, Rosewood, Neem tree are used for making sculptures.
- The artisans mainly source the wood from the Pachamalai Hills along the Tiruchy- Perambalur border and the Thanjavur-Kumbakonam belt.
- Several temple cars with artistic features are even seen at the temples in the districts of Perambalur, Ariyalur, Tiruchy, Salem, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Thanjavur and Madurai which were crafted by the forefathers of Arumbavur Temple car sthapatis (idol makers)
- One of the uniqueness of the craft is the entire design carved out of a single block of wood given that a single error could damage the entire piece.

Tamil Nadu govt's 'Aarogya' scheme complements AYUSH Ministry schemes for boosting immunity through traditional medicine

- '**Aarogya**' scheme (Health scheme) of the **Tamil Nadu government**, a scheme to use traditional medicines for **boosting immunity**, is being taken up in various Cauvery Delta districts like Trichy, Karur, Ariyaloor and Perambaloor, as a complement to schemes being popularized by the AYUSH Ministry.
- Dr. S Kamaraj, Senior Siddha Medical Officer stated that traditional immunity boosting formulations like Kabusoora, Nilaveembu along with herbs like gooseberry are being used by the Directorate of Traditional Medicine in the forms

of powders as well as medicines. He pointed out that with the WHO putting out a world wide call for "Living with Corona" immunity boosting medications that are eco-friendly have gained more importance.

- He further stated that the medications are being supplied to common people in both powder as well as medicine forms in the various dispensaries of the Traditional Medicine Directorate as well as at the KAP Viswanathan Medical College Hospital in Trichy.
- He stated that special importance is given to ensure ready availability of these formulations to the forefront warriors of the fight against Covid-19 like doctors, nurses, sanitary workers, police and fire service personnel etc.

Tamil Nadu begins work on implementing Solar Fence Farmland Protection Programme

- The **Tamil Nadu** government has started preliminary works for implementing the unique **Solar Fence Farmland Protection Programme**, under the Central Agriculture Improvement Scheme.
- The temporary break from normal agricultural activities because of Covid-19 lockdown is being utilized by farmers in such innovative preparatory works.
- Since many of the districts in the state, including Trichy, Theni, Coimbatore etc have the foothills of the Western Ghats as one of their boundaries, agricultural lands in these areas are always at a risk of attack from animals - especially elephants.
- Against this background, the electric fences powered by eco-friendly, non polluting solar panels are being set up in various parts of the state.
- Under the Central Agriculture Improvement Scheme, 50% of the cost of constructing the electric fence, including setting up of the power generating solar panels, will be provided as subsidy to farmers.
- A maximum limit of **2.18 lakh rupees** has been fixed for availing subsidy.

Free online coaching for Tamil Nadu NEET aspirants from June 15

- The **Department of School Education** in association with Amphisoft **Technologies E - box** will be offering a **free online crash course** to **government and government-aided school students** registered for **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2020**, **Tamil Nadu government** has announced.
- The course will be offered for both English and Tamil medium students. Students enrolled for the course will be able to solve over 6,500 questions covering all concepts in physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology.
- The training comprises of four hours of video lectures and four hours of practice and formative tests. The entire course will cover 80 chapter-wise practice tests, 80 formative tests, five-unit tests, two half portion tests, and 10 full portion tests.
- All the Chief Educational Officers have been informed by the department that the students who have registered for NEET 2020 can register for this course through <http://app.eboxcolleges.com/neetregister>

Tripura

Tripura govt to launch agri entrepreneur facilitation desk to boost economy

- **Tripura government** has announced the launch of an **agro-based entrepreneurship facilitation desk** in a bid to **boost primary sectors**, such as **agriculture**, after nationwide lockdown restrictions, which were initially enforced nationwide since March 25 for 21 days and then further extended for another 19 days till May 3 to contain the spread of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak, are lifted.
- The state cabinet has approved the setting up of the desk, which will operate from the **Directorate of Horticulture and Soil Conservation** in the state capital, Agartala.

- The desk will be manned by those who hold a masters' degree in business administration (MBA) or an undergraduate degree in science.
- The state government has worked out an estimated budget of Rs 24 lakh for the exercise, including the salaries of new hires and other related official activities. The Technical Support Group Funds of the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture will fund the project.

Tripura CM launches online portal scholarships.gov.in

- In Tripura, Chief Minister **Biplab Kumar Deb** has launched an online portal **scholarships.gov.in** under 'Mukhyamantri Yuba Yogayog Yojana' at the state secretariat.
- Mr. Deb while launching the online portal stated under the Yojana, the state government will provide **Rs. 5,000** to 14,608 youths who are in final year in colleges or Universities as a grant for Smart Phones.
- He hoped that the students will be benefited by the scheme and students will use the smartphones in positive ways.
- The submission of online application for the scheme has started and will continue till 6th June.

Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand CM launches portal HOPE to help unemployed youth get jobs

- **Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat** launched a **portal** aimed at creating employment avenues for the **trained youth** as well as offering them **skill development opportunities** to increase their employability.
- The portal, '**HOPE**' - **Helping Out People Everywhere**, has already begun collecting data on the youths staying in the state as well as migrant youths who have returned recently from outside.
- The portal will not only provide a platform to the youths for job hunting and skill development through its database but will also help potential employers find human resources as per their requirements.
- Once the database is ready, the portal will be linked with the **Mukhya Mantri Swarojgar Yojana** which was launched recently.
- Information on youths applying from a particular village will be readily available on the portal and will help in village-based analysis of the database.
- In view of the decline in employment opportunities caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the chief minister wants to train the youths or refine the skills of the trained to help them get jobs.

In a first, Uttarakhand releases report on conservation of endemic, threatened floras

- **Uttarakhand** has become the **first state to release a unique report** highlighting its conservation efforts to save over **1,100 rare plants from extinction**.
- Herbs like 'Ashwagandha', 'Giloy', 'Kalmegh' and 'Chitrak', which are presently part of scientists' research to find a possible cure to coronavirus, are included in this conservation programme.
- **As many as 1,145 plant species** have been **conserved** out of which **46 species are endemic** to Uttarakhand and **68 species are rare, endangered or threatened, under red list** of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) or under state biodiversity board, under this project by the research wing of the state forest department.
- This project is aimed at germplasm conservation so that species remain conserved with the forest department even if they disappear from their natural habitat in the wild.
- Conservation of endemic species is considered to be particularly important as they exist in one geographical region only.

- '**Brahmkamal**', an endangered plant named after Hindu god Brahma, and mythological '**Sanjeevani**' herb are also among the conserved floras under this programme.
- Brahmkamal (scientific name: Saussurea obvallata), found at over 12,000 feet altitude in the Himalayan region bordering China, is the state flower of Uttarakhand and considered a very sacred flower. It also has tremendous medicinal properties, is used as antiseptic and for treatment of other ailments.
- Sanjeevani (Selaginella bryopteris) is another rare herb which has found a mention in Ramayan.
- Similarly, **Thuner (Taxusbaccata)**, a tree found at very high altitude in Himalayan region and at the verge of extinction because of extraction of 'taxol', used in treating breast cancer, and **Bhojpatra** -- a holy tree on the bark of which ancient scriptures were written -- being the last species in tree line, are also conserved by the Uttarakhand forest department.
- Bhojpatra (Betula utilis) is found in the Himalayan region at around 10,000 ft altitude, before the start of glaciers.
- The conservation programme covers all classes of plants - tree, shrub, herb, bamboo, wild climbers, fern, orchid, grass, cane, alpine flowers, palm, cycad, cactus, succulent, aquatic species, insectivorous plants and even lower plants like moss, lichen and algae, which have been documented, classified and conserved for the first time.
- Some of the famous and endangered plant species conserved are Chandan, Raktchandan, Ritha, Vajradanti, Jatamasi, Dhoop, Badritulsi, Sita Ashok, Mithavish, Sarpagandha, Brahmi, Salampanja (orchid), Kalmegha, and Buransh among others.

Uttarakhand launches Mukhyamantri Swarozgar Yojana for returnee migrants

- Uttarakhand chief minister **Trivendra Singh Rawat** inaugurated the **Mukhyamantri Swarozgar Yojana**.
- This scheme is to retain the **migrants who have returned** to the state during the lockdown.
- This scheme should be widely publicised through public representatives and district level officers so that the maximum number of villagers can take advantage of it. Under this scheme, the district magistrate should coordinate with the bankers so that the beneficiaries do not have any problem in taking loan.
- The migrants who apply under this programme will get quick approval from the authorities concerned and their applications will be forwarded to banks with immediate subsidy which will be 25% in the hill districts and 15% in the plain districts.
- The project aims at giving **self-employment opportunities to youth** and a boost to reverse migration, especially entrepreneurs returning to Uttarakhand and encourage skilled and unskilled artisans, handicrafts and unemployed youths to start their own business.
- **The scheme will offer credit facility through nationalised banks, scheduled commercial banks and cooperative banks.**
- Under the Yojana, the margin money will be provided as a grant by the MSME department. According to the MSME policy, the maximum limit for margin money in classified category A will be 25% of the total project cost, 20% in category B and 15% for projects of the total project cost in C and D category. Margin money will be adjusted as a grant after the successful operation of the enterprise for minimum two years.
- A person needs to be at least 18 years of age to be able to apply under the scheme. The applicant or his family member will be benefited only once under the scheme.

Uttar Pradesh

Gorakhpur terracotta to get GI Tag

- In the case of **Gorakhpur terracotta**, the application was filed by **Laxmi Terracotta Murtikala Kendra** in **Uttar Pradesh**.

- The terracotta work of Gorakhpur is a centuries-old traditional art form, where the potters make various animal figures like, horses, elephants, camel, goat, ox, etc. with hand-applied ornamentation.
- Some of the major products of craftsmanship include the Hauda elephants, Mahawatdar horse, deer, camel, five-faced Ganesha, singled-faced Ganesha, elephant table, chandeliers, hanging bells etc.
- The entire work is done with bare hands and artisans use natural colour, which stays fast for a long time.
- There are more than 1,000 varieties of terracotta work designed by the local craftsmen.
- The craftsmen are mainly spread over the villages of Aurangabad, Bharwalia, Langadi Gularia, Budhadih, Amawa, Ekla etc. in Bhathat and Padri Bazar, Belwa Raipur, Jungle Ekla No-1, Jungle Ekla No-2 in Chargawan block of Gorakhpur.

UP govt makes Arogya Setu app must for those in hotspot areas

- **Uttar Pradesh** government has made it compulsory to download **Arogya Setu app** for those living in **hotspot** areas of the state. State government has issued instructions regarding opening of offices, and resuming work in industrial areas.
- Special instructions have been issued for surveillance management in hotspot areas and containment zones.
- Now Arogya setu App is a must for everyone in Hotspot area. If anyone is facing any problem in download and use of the app then teams comprising members of administration, Medical Services and Police personal will help them.
- Administrative and health department officials have been directed for contact mapping of every case in hotspot area. five or more persons will not be allowed to gather at any point as part of the covid-19 management.

UP govt launches 'Startup Fund' to encourage youth for entrepreneurship

- **Uttar Pradesh** government has launched the '**Uttar Pradesh Startup Fund**' to encourage the **youth of the state for entrepreneurship**. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath handed over the first installment of **15 crore rupees** to **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** at a function in Lucknow.
- A new start-up policy is need of the hour for agriculture, health, education, and other important sectors so that youth of state could connect with it.
- The MoU between the state government and SIDBI as a step in this direction, which will further strengthen the possibilities of job creation in state.
- A large number of migrant workers had come to the state and that they needed to be given jobs on the basis of their skills.
- The current emphasis on startups will not only solve their problems but the benefit of their energy and talent will also be provided to the entire country through state.

UP govt to form commission to map skills of migrant labourers

- The **Uttar Pradesh** government stated it will form a **migration commission** to identify the **skills of returning migrant workers** and provide employment to them. The government also plans to provide **insurance** to these workers.
- The chief minister also decided to ensure that every migrant worker coming to Uttar Pradesh gets employment. The state government believes that in the wake of the pandemic, it is the first priority of the state government to bring back every migrant safely.
- The chief minister also decided to offer insurance to secure the lives of migrant labourers and called for a scheme to ensure job security for them in the state.
- The Uttar Pradesh government has already started the process of skill mapping of migrant labourers so that they can be provided employment once they complete the quarantine period,

- Such persons should be accommodated in different sectors on the basis of data found during skill mapping, the chief minister stated.

Uttar Pradesh govt to develop 800 km roads as Herbal roads

- **Uttar Pradesh government** will develop **800 km roads** as **Herbal roads** in the state. These herbal roads will have medicinal and herbal trees on both sides.
- Deputy Chief Minister and state PWD minister of state Keshav Prasad Maurya stated that these herbal roads will have trees like like Peepal, Neem, Sehjan along with other herb varieties like brahmi, ashvagandha and jatrofa.

West Bengal

West Bengal govt launches scheme to utilise 50,000-acre barren land in six districts

- The **West Bengal government** launched a scheme to utilise **50,000 acres of barren land** in six districts for income-generating activities like **horticulture and pisciculture**.
- Government had been working on the '**Matir Smristi**' scheme, which will benefit around 2.5 lakh people in rural Bengal.
- There is at least 50,000 acre of barren land in Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, Jhargram, West Burdwan and West Midnapore districts, which cannot produce anything naturally nor can the farmers cultivate on the strip.
- Work has been initiated in 6,500 acre of land at the micro level. This is an environment-friendly scheme.
- Farmers will be involved in constituting cooperative societies, which will get financial support from the cooperative banks.
- Preference would be given to locals for carrying out the project in which "lakhs of women self-help groups" will be involved.
- The state government will provide ad hoc bonus of **Rs 4,200 for 2020-21**, an increase of **Rs 200** over the last year's figure, the salary ceiling for eligibility has been increased from Rs 30,000 to Rs 34,250.
- The festival advance is raised from **Rs 8,000 in 2019- 20** to **Rs 10,000** and the salary ceiling for eligibility **from Rs 34,250 to Rs 41,100**.
- This increase in **bonus and festival advance**, and also the eligibility will benefit over 10 lakh government employees and employees of panchayat and municipal bodies, university and school staff. The total financial implication will be about **Rs 400 crore**.

Centre, WB govt, AIIB sign agreement for USD 145 million project to improve irrigation in West Bengal

- **Government of India, West Bengal Government** and the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**, AIIB signed a loan agreement for a **145 million dollar project** to improve **irrigation services** and **flood management** in the Damodar Valley Command Area in West Bengal.
- Finance Ministry stated, the West Bengal Major Irrigation and Flood Management Project will benefit about 27 lakh farmers from five districts of the state with better irrigation services and improved protection against annual flooding.
- The agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and Rajat Misra, Director General on behalf of the AIIB.
- Mr Khare stated, India is adopting a strategic growth path that uses and manages its water resources more efficiently. He stated, this project will assist in improving irrigation and agriculture in the Damodar Valley Command Area, by optimizing the use of surface and groundwater.

- It will also strengthen flood management, which will help boost agricultural productivity and increase incomes in rural areas. The total value of the project is over 413 million dollars.

Revision Points

State	Capital	Chief Minister	Governor
Andhra Pradesh	Amaravati	Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy	Biswa Bhusan Harichandan
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	Pema Khandu	Brigadier BD Mishra
Assam	Dispur	SarabanandaSonowal	Jagdish Mukhi
Bihar	Patna	Nitish Kumar	Phagu Chauhan
Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Bhupesh Baghel	AnusuiyaUikey
Goa	Panaji	Pramod Sawant	S.P Malik
Gujarat	Gandhi Nagar	Vijaybhai R. Rupani	Acharya Devvrat
Haryana	Chandigarh	Manohar Lal Khattar	Satyadev Narayan Arya
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla	Jai Ram Thakur	BandaruDattatraya
Jharkhand	Ranchi	Hemant Soren	Draupadi Murmu
Karnataka	Bengaluru	B S Yediyurappa	VajubhaiRudabhaiVala
Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	Pinarayi Vijayan	Arif Mohammed Khan
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	Lalji Tandon
Maharashtra	Mumbai	Uddhav Thackrey	Bhagat Singh Koshiyari
Manipur	Imphal	N Biren Singh	Padmanabha Balkrishna Acharya (Add. Charge)
Meghalaya	Shillong	Conrad Sangma	RN Ravi (Additional Charge)
Mizoram	Aizawl	Pu Zoramthanga	P S Sreedharan Pillai
Nagaland	Kohima	Neiphiu Rio	RN Ravi
Odisha	Bhubaneshwar	Naveen Patnaik	Ganeshi Lal
Punjab	Chandigarh	Amarinder Singh	V P Singh Badnore
Rajasthan	Jaipur	Ashok Gehlot	Kalraj Mishra
Sikkim	Gangtok	Prem Singh Tamang(PS Golay)	Ganga Prasad
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Edappadi K. Palaniswami	Banwarilal Purohit
Telangana	Hyderabad	K. Chandrasekhar Rao	TamilisaiSoundararajan
Tripura	Agartala	Biplab Kumar Deb	Ramesh Bais

Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Yogi Adityanath	Anandiben Patel
Uttarakhand	Dehradun	Trivendra Singh Rawat	Baby Rani Maurya
West Bengal	Kolkata	Mamata Banerjee	Jagdeep Dhankhar

Important National News

Nitin Gadkari launches bank of schemes, ideas, innovation & research portal on MSMEs

- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari** launched bank of schemes, ideas, innovation and Research portal - <http://ideas.msme.gov.in> on MSMEs. The portal gives access to all schemes of Union, States and Union Territory Governments and has the provision for uploading ideas, innovations and researches in the sector.
- It has unique features of not only crowd sourcing of ideas, but also evaluation and rating the ideas by crowd sourcing. It can also facilitate inflow of venture capital, and foreign collaboration. Besides, the portal will benefit the potential entrepreneurs as one stop compendium of ideas, innovation and research ready for commercialization.
- Launching the portal through video conferencing from Nagpur, Mr Gadkari stated that this portal will prove to be of great transformational significance to economy in general and the MSMEs in particular.
- He also suggested that category-wise classification and analysis of information and the achievements which may be published so that others can learn and take lessons from successful experiences. He stressed upon the need for conversion of knowledge into wealth.
- The Minister also stated that there is a need for greater work on Research, Technology, Innovation which can bring down cost and improve quality.
- Minister of State for MSME **Pratap Chandra Sarangi** stated this portal will help the MSMEs in a big way through information sharing.

CAIT to launch national e-commerce marketplace 'bharatmarket' for retail traders

- Traders' body **Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT)** has announced to launch a national e-commerce marketplace '**bharatmarket**' soon for all retail traders in collaboration with several technology partners.
- CAIT stated the marketplace will integrate capabilities of various technology companies to provide end-to-end services in the logistics and supply chains from manufacturers to end consumers, including deliveries at home.
- CAIT Secretary General **Praveen Khandelwal** stated the e-commerce portal will include a nationwide participation by retailers and aims to bring 95 per cent of retail traders onboard the platform, who would exclusively run the portal.
- He stated the initiative has had active support and guidance of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, as they see this as an effective way to get essential commodities to consumers during the lockdown period and within containment zones.
- CAIT National President BC Bhartia stated the traders body is looking to enrol about one crore retailers on this e-marketplace in 2020 and make it the world's largest and most-unique e-marketplace ever.

Government raises Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) of 49 items in view of circumstances arising out of Covid 19

- In a crucial announcement affecting the livelihoods of tribal gatherers, the Government revised the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) of 49 items. **TRIFED** to monitor the implementation of the revised MSP in states
- The order issued by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in New Delhi states that the MSP for MFPs is revised once in every 3 years by the Pricing Cell constituted under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.
- It further states that however, in view of the exceptional and very difficult circumstances currently prevailing in the country on account of COVID-19 pandemic and the potential of the instant scheme to offer the much needed support to the tribal MFP gatherers, the competent authority has decided to relax the existing provisions in the scheme guidelines and effect revision of MSP in respect of the MFP items currently covered under the scheme after the due consultation with MFP Pricing Cell.
- The increase across various items of minor forest produce ranges from **16% to 66%**
- The increase is expected to provide an immediate and much needed momentum to procurement of Minor Tribal Produce in atleast 20 States.

IDEAthon launched by Jal Shakti ministry

- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** and **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** organized an **IDEAthon** on “**The future of River Management**” to explore how the COVID-19 crisis can shape River Management strategies for the future.
- The IDEAthon led to a very interactive discussion on various aspects of river management. The attendees also took part in parallel polls which were being run during the IDEAthon. Multiple questions were also received from the attendees.
- It introduced ‘**Ganga Quest**’ (an online quiz at gangaquest.com) as one of the initiatives to engage people with knowledge on River Ganga which has evoked a huge response, in the wake of the lockdown, with more than 600,000 students and others joining now.

PM Narendra Modi to participate in NAM virtual summit on coronavirus

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi would participate in the **virtual summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** to enhance coordination of the member states in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic.
- PM Modi would take part in the NAM virtual summit which is being organised at the initiative of **Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev** in his capacity as the current chair of the movement.
- The online session will conclude with a political declaration of the movement “**uniting against Covid-19**” as well as identified measures for enhanced coordination among NAM members in their battle against the coronavirus.
- The NAM represents the biggest grouping of countries outside the United Nations, comprising **120 developing countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America**.

Health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan launches multimedia guide 'COVID Katha'

- **Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan** launched ‘**COVID Katha**’, a multimedia guide on the Covid-19 disease.
- While releasing COVID Katha, Vardhan stated that, it is extremely useful and exemplary science communication solution for the people at large in the present scenario. It is freely accessible on smart phones, desktop computers as well as other electronic devices.”
- This creative communication channel may help numerous Corona Warriors and have far reaching efforts of building mass awareness on current health and social crisis.

- It is designed to educate on the objective interpretation of scientific aspects. This resource will strengthen public understanding of science and health in the special context of COVID-19.
- He also congratulated the team involved in this creative and innovative endeavour.
- The Union Minister interacted with heads of all Autonomous Institutions (AIs) and Subordinate offices of Department of Science and Technology (DST) via video conferencing on the occasion of 50th DST Foundation Day about their S & T initiatives, particularly in relation to their endeavours for combating the Covid-19 outbreak.

MCA constitutes 7-member panel to enhance audit independence

- The **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** has constituted a **seven-member committee** to examine the comments received on the consultation paper floated by it for **enhancing audit independence and accountability** in the country.
- The committee will examine the comments and make recommendations requiring any amendments in law, rules and standards to achieve the objective of enhancement of audit independence and accountability.
- The panel has been asked to submit its report by June 30. The committee members are: Amarjit Chopra, Past President of CA Institute; KVR Murty, Joint Secretary, MCA; PR Ramesh, former Deloitte India Chairman; Ajay Bahl, Co-Founder & Managing Partner, AZB Partners; Sridhar Pamarthi, Joint Director, MCA; NK Dua, Joint Director, MCA, and Atma Sah, Deputy Director, MCA.
- The MCA had earlier come up with a 20-page consultation paper seeking comments from government departments and regulatory agencies, besides others, by 28 February 2020 on wide ranging issues affecting audit independence. The consultation paper had sought to address five threats for auditor independence, self-interest, self-review, advocacy, familiarity and intimidation.
- To address the oligopoly of 'Big4' audit firms (economic concentration of audit) and making the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) prepare a separate panel of auditors for appointment as auditors of listed entities.

Niti Aayog starts campaign to 'protect' senior citizens during COVID-19

- Government **think tank Niti Aayog** in association with **Piramal Foundation** the philanthropic arm of the Piramal Group launched a campaign '**Surakshit Dada-Dadi & Nana-Nani Abhiyan**' focused on ensuring well-being of **senior citizens** during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The campaign will reach over 2.9 million senior citizens in 25 #AspirationalDistricts across Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, MP, Maharashtra, Rajasthan & UP; focusing on behavior change, access to services, early detection & tracking of #COVID19 symptoms.
- '**Surakshit Dada-Dadi & Nana-Nani Abhiyan**' is aimed at creating awareness about various aspects of senior citizens' health and lifestyle including preventive measures and requisite behavioral changes in view of COVID-19 pandemic.

Govt extends time limit for annual GST returns for financial year 2018-19 till 30 September

- Government has announced further relaxations for filing of **Annual returns for Goods and Services Tax (GST)** and movement of goods in the country.
- The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** has extended the time limit for furnishing of the annual return and GST audit for the financial year 2018-2019, till **30 September, 2020**.
- Government has also given an extension till **31st May** for all the e-way bills generated on or before the March 24th, whose validity were to expire between March 20th and April 15th.
- This relaxation will allow seamless movement of goods and supplies through road transport carriers ensuring availability of supplies across the county.

Vande Bharat Mission begins to bring back stranded Indians from abroad

- In one of the largest evacuation exercises named the **Vande Bharat Mission**, the government is operating **64 flights** till **13th May** to bring home nearly 14,800 Indian nationals stranded abroad due to the coronavirus lockdown.
- **Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar** urged the stranded individuals to stay in touch with the Indian embassies in their countries.
- The 64 flights will include 10 flights from the UAE, 2 from Qatar, 5 from Saudi Arabia, 7 from UK, 5 from Singapore, 7 from the United States, 5 from the Philippines, 7 from Bangladesh, 2 from Bahrain, 7 from Malaysia, 5 from Kuwait and 2 flights from Oman. Out of the total, fifteen flights will bring back people to Kerala followed by eleven flights each to Tamil Nadu and Delhi. Seven flights will be flying back people to Maharashtra and Telangana whereas five flights are slated for Gujarat.
- The Maximum number of flights in the first week of repatriation will bring back citizens from the Gulf countries. More than 350 Indians from UAE are flying back home.

Govt sets target of constructing roads worth Rs 15 lakh cr in next two years

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises **Nitin Gadkari** stated, his ministry has set a target of constructing roads worth **15 lakh crore rupees** in the next **two years**.
- He stated, the ministry is working overtime to clear all arbitration cases with concessionaires. Mr Gadkari was holding a meeting via video conferencing with the members of Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers on impact of COVID-19 on auto sector. Mr Gadkari suggested that the focus should be on enhancing liquidity in business, as ups and downs are common.
- The Minister informed that the officials have been asked to finalize the auto scrapping policy quickly and stated, it will go a long way in cost reduction. He also suggested exploring cheaper credits including foreign capital for enhancing liquidity in the automobile manufacturing sector.

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates 80 km long road curtailing Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage time

- Union Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** inaugurated the road link from **Uttarakhand's Dharchula to Lipulekh** at China Border.
- Singh also flagged off a convoy of vehicles from Pithoragarh to Gunji through video conferencing.
- The road originates from Ghatiabagarh and terminates at Lipulekh Pass, the gateway to Kailash-Mansarovar. In this 80 kilometre road, the altitude rises from 6,000 to 17,060 feet.
- With this connectivity, passengers will now take 6 days less to travel than before, a light vehicle can ply up to 75 kms (5 km short of boundary) and a five day trek will be reduced to two days.
- The event was attended by Director General of BRO Lt Gen Harpal Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane, Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Lok Sabha Member of Parliament from Almora (Uttarakhand) Shri Ajay Tamta and senior officials of Ministry of Defence and BRO.

India Post partners ICMR for delivery of COVID-19 testing kits to 200 labs in country

- **India Post** has entered into a tie up with **ICMR** for delivery of its Covid-19 testing Kits from its 16 regional depots to the **200 testing labs** in the country.
- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has set a target of carrying out around one lakh tests across the country per day.
- For this crucial work, India Post with its vast network of one lakh 56 thousand post offices has once again geared up for performing as a strong COVID warrior.

- India Post has delivered consignments to remote areas including Imphal, Aizawl, Dungarpur, Churu, Jhalawar, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota and other places. These kits are being delivered packed in dry ice.
- Union Minister of Communications Ravi Shankar Prasad appreciated the renewed commitment and partnership between ICMR and Department of Posts.
- He stated, India Post has been delivering mails, medicines, financial assistance at doorsteps and even distributing food and ration to needy during lockdown.
- Mr Prasad called upon the Department to continue with its good work and leave no stone unturned in making timely delivery of medicines, testing kits and other medical equipments.

India launches Mission Sagar to assist island nations in Eastern Indian Ocean

- India launched **Mission Sagar** as part of the government's outreach initiative towards five Island nations in the Indian Ocean amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Indian Naval Ship Kesari** has departed for Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, to provide Food Items, COVID related Medicines including HCQ Tablets and Special Ayurvedic Medicines with Medical Assistance Teams embarked.
- Also, as part of Mission Sagar, Indian Naval Ship Kesari would enter the Port of Male in the Republic of Maldives, to provide them 600 tons of food provisions. India and Maldives are close maritime neighbours with strong and extremely cordial defence and diplomatic relations.
- The deployment is in consonance with the Prime Ministers' vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR' promulgated in March 2015.
- SAGAR highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with her neighbouring countries and further strengthens the existing bond.
- The operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

Centre sets up six-member panel to review production sharing contracts

- **Ministry of petroleum and natural gas** has set up a **six-member expert committee** to review the existing **production sharing contracts (PSCs)** owing to the fall in crude oil prices and the Covid-19 lockdown.
- Because of lower oil and gas price environment, there is a need to find ways of attracting investment in exploration and production of oil and gas.
- The committee's scope includes suggesting methodology for increased production and activities and changes required in the existing policies. The panel has members from ONGC, Oil India, directorate general of hydrocarbons (DGH), ministry of petroleum, and former DGH officials, with expertise in the operational aspects of hydrocarbon industry.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has curtailed activities and downsized the global energy demand, resulting in excess supply and low prices. However, this lower price regime is denting the profits of domestic producers.
- Based on industry estimates, domestic producers save the country **more than Rs 1.7 trillion** annually with their production and consequent reduced imports.

Government Hikes 2020-21 Market Borrowing Limit to Rs 12 Lakh Crore Amid COVID-19

- The government increased its **market borrowing** estimate by staggering **Rs 4.2 lakh crore** to **Rs 12 lakh crore** for the **current financial** year to deal with the expected shortfall in revenue due to the impact of COVID-19 crisis on the economy.
- The government resorts to market borrowing to make up for the mismatch between its revenue and expenditure.
- The estimated gross market borrowing in the financial year 2020-21 will be Rs 12 lakh crore in place of Rs 7.80 lakh crore as per BE 2020-21. The above revision in borrowings has been necessitated on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Finance Ministry stated in a statement.
- The government has also increased the weekly borrowing target to Rs 30,000 crore from Rs 21,000 crore fixed on March 31.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget for 2020-21 had pegged gross borrowing in the new financial year at Rs 7.8 lakh crore, higher than Rs 7.1 lakh crore estimated for 2019-20.
- With the increase in the borrowing estimate, the government would have to revise upwards its fiscal deficit target from 3.5 per cent pegged for the current fiscal.

Centre releases Rs 6,195 crore to 14 states to fight coronavirus crisis

- The government released **Rs 6,195.08 crore** to **14 states** as the second equated monthly instalment of the **Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant** as recommended by the Finance Commission.
- This would provide them additional resources during the coronavirus crisis, the Finance Ministry stated in a statement.
- Giving a break up of the amount to be given as to cover deficit on post-devolution revenue account in 2020-21 as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission on a monthly proportionate basis to 14 state governments in May.
- The Ministry stated, "Rs 49,141.66 for Andhra Pradesh, Rs 63,158.33 for Assam, Rs 95,258.33 for Himachal Pradesh, Rs 12,7691.66 for Kerala, Rs 23,533.33 for Manipur, Rs 4,091.66 for Meghalaya, Rs 11,850 for Mizoram, Rs 32,621.66 for Nagaland, Rs 63,825 for Punjab, Rs 33,541.66 for Tamil Nadu, Rs 26,966.66 for Tripura, Rs 42,300 for Uttarakhand, Rs 41,775 for West Bengal and Rs 3,733.33 for Sikkim.

PM Modi announces special economic package worth Rs 20 lakh crore to kick-start economy

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has announced a **special economic package** worth **20 lakh crore** rupees for an '**Atma-Nirbhar Bharat**' or **self-reliant India**, saying that self reliance is the only way to ensure that 21st Century belongs to India.
- The Prime Minister noted that this package, together with earlier announcements by the government during COVID crisis and decisions taken by RBI, is to the tune of 20 lakh crore rupees. This is equivalent to almost 10 percent of India's GDP.
- The Prime Minister observed that the package will also focus on land, labour, liquidity and laws. It will cater to various sections including cottage industry, MSMEs, labourers, middle class, industries, among others.
- The Prime Minister stated several bold reforms are needed to make the country self-reliant, so that the impact of crisis such as COVID, can be negated in future. These reforms include supply chain reforms for agriculture, rational tax system, simple and clear laws, capable human resource and a strong financial system. These reforms will promote business, attract investment, and further strengthen Make in India.
- The Prime Minister expressed confidence in India's capabilities and manpower. He stated that India will build new supply chains, create better products and lead the global recovery.

- Mr Modi stated India's self-reliance will be based on five pillars - economy, infrastructure, technology driven system, vibrant demography and demand. The Prime Minister also stated that Coronavirus is going to be a part of people's lives for a long time, but lives cannot simply revolve around it.

Govt announces collateral free loan worth 3 lakh crore rupees benefiting 45 lakh MSMEs

- Government has announced the first tranche of stimulus packages, under the **Atma-Nirbhar Bharat Yojana**.
- These financial packages equaling to **10 per cent of the national GDP** and amounting to **20 lakh crore rupees**.
- 15 special financial packages of 6 lakh 40 thousand crore rupees benefitting a wide array of sectors including MSMEs, Discoms, Real Estate, Middle Class, Tax Payers and others.
- In a historical decision, the ambit of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been widened resulting in inclusion of many small and micro industries under this sector. This decision of changing the definition of MSMEs will increase competition and productivity in the sector. In a major boost to the MSME sector, **collateral free loan of 3 lakh crore rupees** has been announced. The loan will have **4 year tenure** and will have **12 month moratorium**.
- Also, MSME definition has been changed to allow units with investment up to **Rs 1 crore** to be called **micro units** in place of **Rs 25 lakh now**. Also units with turnover up to **Rs 5 crore** to be called micro units.
- These loans will benefit **45 lakh small and medium units**. Another package of **20 thousand crore rupees** for **stressed MSMEs** benefitting **2 lakh units** have also been announced.
- **50 thousand crore rupees** will be infused in the MSMEs through the equity channel. Opening up avenues for indigenous companies.
- Tenders for Government procurement **up to 200 crore rupees** will no longer be through **Global Tender route**.
- **e-Market linkage** for MSMEs has been announced to ensure wider reach for sale of products from the small and medium industries. Government bodies and PSUs have been directed to clear all pending dues of MSMEs within next 45 days.

25% cut in TDS and TCS rates till 31st of March 2021; Last date for filing of Income Tax return extended till Nov 30

- In a major announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, **Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) and Tax Collected at Source (TCS)** have been **reduced by 25 per cent** till **31st March of next year**. This decision will increase cash flow of over **50 thousand crore rupees** benefitting common people. **The date for filing Income Tax return** for the **last financial year** has also been **extended till 30th November**, while last date for **filing tax audits** has been extended from **30th September to 31st October**.
- Finance Minister also announced **reduction of statutory provident fund** contribution by both employers and employees to **10 percent of basic wages** from the **existing 12 per cent** for the **next three months**. The decision has been taken to facilitate more take-home salary for employees and give relief to employers in payment of PF dues, resulting in a liquidity ease of **6,750 crore rupees**.
- The decision will be applicable on all the establishments covered under **the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**.
Besides, Ms Sitharaman also announced the **extension of another scheme** under the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package(PMGKP)** for **three months till August** this year.
- Under it the government would contribute entire **24per cent of PF contributions** till August. Under the PMGKP, payment of **12 percent of employer** and **12 per cent employee** contributions were made into EPFaccounts. The total benefits accrued is about 2500 crore rupees to 72.22lakh employees.

- Also announced a sum of **30 thousand crore rupees** for Non-Banking Financial Companies, **Housing Finance Companies-HFCs** and **Micro Finance Institutions** under a special liquidity scheme. Further, 45 thousand crore rupees **partial credit guarantee scheme 2.0** was also unveiled for NBFCs, HFCs, and MFIs with low credit rating to help them **extend loans to individuals and MSMEs**.
- Providing relief to the construction companies, **Central agencies like Railways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Central Public Works**, have been asked to grant an **extension of six months for completion of work** covering construction and other related contracts.
- The move will benefit real estate sector and agencies which have been entrusted to complete civil work.

Tourism Ministry organizes 18th webinar titled 'Odisha-India's Best kept secret'

- The Ministry of Tourism's **Dekho Apna Desh** webinar series, titled, '**Odisha-India's Best kept secret**' took the participants on a virtual journey into **Odisha**. The webinar was 18th webinar under Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series.
- Tourism Secretary of Odisha Vishal Dev set the tone for the presentation with his introductory remarks giving brief introduction to the State of Odisha and highlighting on the key selling proposition of Odisha such as its ancient civilisation, famous temples with kalinga style of architecture, long coastline endowed with beautiful beaches, arts and handicrafts, culture, popular dance forms such as Odissi, Gotipua, forests. He also informed about the State initiative in promoting Eco Tourism sites.
- The virtual journey covered places like Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary, Udaipur Beach, Manglajodi - unique wetland, Satpada, Chilika lake known for sighting of unique irrawady dolphins, Simlipal National Park, Debrigarh National Park -Ecotourism site at Hirakud reservoir, waterfall, Silent Valley - Gorge, Daringbadi nature Camp, Mahanadi Gorge, Bhetnoi, Beach Locations, Tribal heritage, arts and crafts, textiles, dance forms, festivals and cuisines.
- The objective of Ministry of Tourism's webinar series is to create awareness about and promote various tourism destinations of India, including the lesser known destinations and lesser known facets of popular destinations.

ICCR Releases New Song 'United We Fight' To Strengthen India's Fight Against COVID-19

- The **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** has launched a new song to help people stay united and encourage them to think positive amid the coronavirus pandemic that has ravaged havoc across the world.
- The song '**United We Fight**' is written and composed by Joe Alvares and is sung by Usha Uthup, Salim Merchant, Shefali Alvares Rashid, Benny Dayal, Sonam Kalra, Chandan Bala Kalyan, Joe Alvares, Salome, and Samira. The music is created by Tubby, Pandit Ravi Chari, Pandit Rakesh Chaurasiya, and Ustad Faisal Qureshi.
- United We Fight is a rendition weaving English lyrics into the notes and beats of Indian classical music, spreading the essence of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, ICCR stated
- As per ICCR, the song is meant for an international audience and is created to carry India's message of hope and resilience to the world. The 3.33 minutes long song features the above-mentioned singers and composers who shot their individual parts from the confinement of their homes which was later created into one single video.

Centre Sets up New Body to Promote Rice Exports

- The agriculture ministry has come up with many **new initiatives** and step to cope up with the post-COVID-19 crisis. In this series, the center has set up a new body – **Rice Export Promotion Forum (REPF)** to give further impetus to rice exports, under the aegis of the **Agricultural and Processed Foods Export Promotion Development Authority (Apeda)**.
- **India**, the **second largest producer of rice in the world** and the only agri-commodity from India that maintained its competitiveness in the overseas market.

- As per reports, rice, both basmati and non-basmati variety, is the largest commodity in India's agri export basket which shipments stood at **\$7.77 billion in 2018-19**, with **basmati** exports at **\$4.72 billion** and **non-basmati** at **\$3.05 billion**. However, the final export figures for 2019-20 are yet to be released by Apeda.
- The new body will comprise representatives from the rice industry, exporters, and officials from Apeda, Commerce Ministry, Agriculture Ministry and Directors of Agriculture from major rice-producing states such as West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- India's production has been going up steadily over the past several years. From around **96 million tonnes in 2010-11**, rice production is seen touching a record **117.47 million tonnes in 2019-20**, per Second Advance Estimates.

ICMR to participate in Global Solidarity Trial by WHO for COVID-19 treatment

- **Indian Council for Medical Research**, ICMR has fast tracked the roll out of **Global Solidarity Trial** launched by the **World Health Organization**, WHO to help in finding an effective treatment for Covid-19.
- Secretary, Department of Health Research and Director General of ICMR, Professor Dr. Balram Bhargava stated that the ICMR-National AIDS Research Institute, NARI is the national coordination site for the trial in India. He stated, four potential anti-viral agents, **Remdesivir, Chloroquine-Hydroxychloroquine, Lopinavir-Ritonavir** and **Lopinavir-Ritonavir with interferon** are to be evaluated in the trial.
- Global Solidarity Trial is an international clinical trial to compare four treatment options to assess their effectiveness against Covid-19. The trial aims to discover whether any of the drugs slow down the disease progression and improve survival rate.
- World Health Organization's representative in India, Dr. Henk Bekedam stated that WHO is extending the required support to conduct the trial as India plays a critical role in research as well as in manufacturing.
- Senior Scientist in National AIDS Research Institute, Dr. Sheela stated the required regulatory and ethical approvals have already been obtained and nine clinical trial sites have started to recruit patients in the trial.

MHRD develops SAMARTH Enterprises Resource Planning to provide quality education

- Department of Higher Education, M/o Human Resource Development, has a mission to provide quality education to students across all Universities & HEIs. For this, **M/o HRD** has developed **an e-Governance platform, SAMARTH(Enterprises Resource Planning) ERP**, under the National Mission of Education in Information and Communication Technology Scheme (NMEICT).
- ERP, SAMARTH, is an Open Standard Open Source Architecture, Secure, Scalable and Evolutionary Process Automation Engine for Universities and Higher Educational Institutions. It caters to faculty, students and staff at a University/Higher Educational Institutions.
- Now, the ERP, SAMARTH, has been implemented at National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra, a participating unit under the World Bank-supported Technical Education Quality Improvement Program (TEQIP). The objective of this initiative is to automate the processes of the Institute.
- Following 38 modules have been implemented in **NIT, Kurukshetra**:
- Organigram, Organizational Unit, Users, Employee Management, RTI Management, Legal Case Management, Leave Management, Estate Management, Fee Management, Vendor Bill Tracking, File Management & Tracking, Inventory Management, Research Project Management, Programmes Management, Payroll, Recruitment Management, Health Facilities Management, Knowledge Management, Transport Management, Content Federation (CFS), Training & Placements, Hostel Management, Budget and Accounts, Sports Facilities Management, Grievance Management (Employee), Uni Web Portal, Student Lifecycle, Endowment, College Affiliation, Student Feedback

Management, Minutes and Retrieval/Document, Essential Services, Alumni Management, Core Communication, IT Service Desk, Training of Trainers Management(ToT) and Residence Allocation.

- This initiative will enhance productivity through better information management in the institute by seamless access to information, and its utilization for various purposes.
- The software was provided by the SAMARTH team free of cost to NIT, Kurukshetra; the rollout by done through an in-house team at no additional cost through a collaboration between **NMEICT and TEQIP teams in MHRD**.

Tribal Affairs Ministry in partnership with Facebook launches 'Goal' programme for Digital Skilling of Tribal Youths

- **Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda** launched the **"GOAL (Going Online As Leaders)"** programme of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** in partnership with **Facebook** at a Webinar in New Delhi.
- The GOAL programme is designed to provide mentorship to tribal youth through digital mode. The digitally enabled program envisages to act as a catalyst to explore hidden talents of the tribal youth, which will help in their personal development as well as contribute to all-round upliftment of their society.

About GOAL Program

In this program, 5000 scheduled tribe youth (to be called as 'Mentees') will get an excellent opportunity to get training by experts from different disciplines and fields (to be called as 'Mentors'). There will be 1 mentor for 2 mentees. The program aims to enable Scheduled Tribe (ST) youth in remote areas to use digital platforms for sharing their aspirations, dreams and talent with their mentors.

GOAL (Going Online As Leaders), Joint initiative of **Facebook India** with **Ministry of Tribal affairs**.

5,000 young tribal entrepreneurs, professionals, artisans and artists will be trained on digital skills under digital entrepreneurship program

Aspiring candidates invited to apply at online portal **"goal.tribal.gov.in"**

Application will be open from May 4, 2020 till midnight of July 3, 2020.

Leaders from the industry and academia invited to register as mentors on **"goal.tribal.gov.in"**

The program will also create awareness amongst tribal beneficiaries about various schemes initiated by Central and State Governments for welfare of STs as well as their fundamental duties. Efforts will be made to integrate the program with other government schemes such as Mudra Yojana, Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana, Skill India, Start Up India, Stand Up India, among others. This will enable participants to leverage opportunities provided under these government schemes.

Govt introduces Interest subvention on Working Capital Loans for Dairy sector

- Handholding the Dairy Sector during the Covid-19 crisis, the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** has introduced a new scheme **"Interest subvention on Working Capital Loans for Dairy sector"** for Supporting Dairy Cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organizations engaged in dairy activities (SDC&FPO) for implementation during 2020-21.
- In order to meet the working Capital needs of the Cooperatives and Farmer owned milk producer companies, Interest subvention will be given on working capital loan taken from scheduled Commercial Banks/R.R.Bs/Cooperative Banks/Financial Institutions between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021 by Cooperatives/FPOs for conversion of milk into conserved commodities and other milk products.
- The scheme has made provisions for providing **interest subvention of 2% per annum**, with an **additional incentive of 2% per annum interest** subvention to be given in case of prompt and timely repayment/interest servicing.

- This will help to ease out the working capital crisis for handling surplus milk and enable timely payment to the farmers. The scheme will be implemented by this **Department through National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), Anand.**
- The modified scheme envisages a budgetary provision of **Rs 100 Crore** earmarked for the component “**Interest Subvention on Working Capital Loans for Dairy sector**” during 2020-21.
- The scheme will help in providing stable market access to milk producers and also enable the Producer Owned Institutions to make timely payment of milk bill to milk producers.
- It will help Producer Owned Institutions in supplying quality milk and milk products to consumers at a reasonable price and will also help in stabilizing the domestic market price of conserved dairy commodities and other milk products.

Govt to launch Rs 20000 crore Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana for development of marine & inland fisheries

- The government will also launch a **20,000 crore rupees Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana** for the development of **marine and inland fisheries**. Of this, 11,000 crore rupees will be earmarked for activities in marine, inland fisheries and aquaculture while 9,000 crore rupees for infrastructure creation such as fishing harbours, cold chain and markets. This will provide employment to over 55 lakh persons and double exports to **one lakh crore rupees**.
- The Finance Minister stated the ongoing National Animal Disease Control Programme for Foot and Mouth Disease and Brucellosis will look at 100 per cent vaccination of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, and pigs against Foot and Mouth Disease at an outlay of 13,343 crore rupees.
- In addition to this, a 15,000 crore rupees Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund was announced to support private investment in dairy processing, value addition and cattle feed infrastructure.
- The government has launched a 4,000 crore rupees fund to promote herbal cultivation in about 10 lakh hectares of area. The scheme will help generate 5,000 crore rupees income for farmers. Along the bank of Ganga, a corridor of medicinal plants will be developed over 800 hectares area.
- Another 500 crore rupees has been earmarked for beekeeping initiatives, helping 2 lakh beekeepers.
- The government extended **Operation Greens** from tomato, onion and potato to all fruits and vegetables by providing an additional fund of 500 crore rupees. This money would go into providing subsidy on transportation from surplus to deficient markets as well as on storages including cold storages. Ms Sitharaman stated the scheme will prevent distress sale by farmers.
- The Finance Minister also announced amendment to Essential Commodities Act to enable better price realisation for farmers. The amendment will be largely towards de-regulating certain crops, like potatoes, cereals, and onions. No stock limit shall apply for food processing units, value-addition corporations, and exporters.

Finance Minister announces 5th tranche (last) of economic support under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan

- The 5th tranche is focussed on Government Reforms and Enablers for providing employment, support to businesses, Ease of Doing Business, and State Governments as well sectors such as Education and Health. Seven measures have been announced under this
- Allocation for **MGNREGS** increased by **Rs 40,000 Crore** to provide employment boost– Will help generate nearly 300 crore person-days in total.

- **Health Reforms & Initiatives- Public Expenditure on Health** will be increased by investing in grass-root health institutions. National Institutional Platform for One health by ICMR will encourage research. And the implementation of National Digital Health Blueprint under the National Digital Health Mission.
- **Technology Driven Education with Equity post-COVID-19.**
- **PM eVIDYA**– A programme for multi-mode access to digital/online education to be launched immediately consisting of
 - DIKSHA for school education in states/UTs: e-content and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades (one nation, one digital platform)
 - One earmarked TV channel per class from 1 to 12 (one class, one channel)
 - Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and Podcasts
 - Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired.
- **Top 100 universities** will be permitted to automatically start online courses by **30th May, 2020**.
- **Manodarpan**– An initiative for psychosocial support of students, teachers and families for mental health and emotional wellbeing to be launched immediately.
- **National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission** for ensuring that every child attains Learning levels and outcomes in grade 5 by 2025 will be launched by December 2020.
- Further enhancement of Ease of Doing Business through IBC related measures-
- Minimum threshold to initiate insolvency proceedings raised to Rs. 1 crore (from Rs. 1 lakh, which largely insulates MSMEs).
- Suspension of fresh initiation of insolvency proceedings up to one year, depending upon the pandemic situation.
- **Decriminalisation of Companies Act defaults**- The Amendments will de-clog the criminal courts and NCLT. 7 compoundable offences altogether dropped and 5 to be dealt with under alternative framework.
- **Ease of Doing Business for Corporates**- Direct listing of securities by Indian public companies in permissible foreign jurisdictions. Power to create additional/ specialized benches for NCLAT. Lower penalties for all defaults for Small Companies, One-person Companies, Producer Companies & Start Ups.
- **Public Sector Enterprise Policy for a New, Self-reliant India**- There is a need for a new coherent policy—where all sectors are open to the private sector while public sector enterprises(PSEs) will play an important role in defined areas. Accordingly, the government will announce a new policy whereby,
 - List of strategic sectors requiring presence of PSEs in public interest will be notified. In strategic sectors, at least one enterprise will remain in the public sector but private sector will also be allowed. In other sectors, PSEs will be privatized (timing to be based on feasibility etc)
 - To minimise wasteful administrative costs, number of enterprises in strategic sectors will ordinarily be only one to four; others will be privatised/ merged/ brought under holding companies
 - The support to State Government from Central Government
 - States net borrowing ceiling for 2020-21 is Rs. 6.41 lakh crores, based on 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
 - Centre has decided to increase borrowing limits of States from 3% to 5% for 2020-21 only. This will give States extra resources of Rs. 4.28 lakh crores.

- Part of the borrowing will be linked to specific reforms (including recommendations of the Finance Commission). Reform linkage will be in four areas: universalisation of 'One Nation One Ration card', Ease of Doing Business, Power distribution and Urban Local Body revenues.
- A specific scheme will be notified by the Department of Expenditure on the following pattern:
- Unconditional increase of 0.50%
- 1% in 4 tranches of 0.25%, with each tranche linked to clearly specified, measurable and feasible reform actions
- Further 0.50% if milestones are achieved in at least three out of four reform areas

Centre launches online dashboard to monitor movement of migrant workersP

- The Centre has asked the States to use online portal **National Migrant Information System (NMIS)** for capturing the information on movement of migrants and for better inter-State co-ordination.
- Union Home Secretary, Ajay Bhalla stated that to capture the information regarding movement of migrants and facilitate the smooth movement of stranded persons across States, **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** has developed an online Dashboard- NMIS on the existing NDMA-GIS portal.
- He stated, the portal will maintain a central repository and help the sending as well as receiving State and district to ask for and give their acceptance in an online format seamlessly. This system will help in speedy communication between States without creating additional work at the level of the field officers.
- Mr Bhalla stated, it has additional advantages like contact tracing, which may be useful in overall COVID response work. Through this system, States can upload batch file of individual data on the portal.
- The key data pertaining to the persons migrating has been standardized for uploading such as name, age, mobile number, originating and destination district, and date of travel which States are already collecting. Mr Bhalla stated, States will be able to visualize how many people are going out from where and how many are reaching destination states. The mobile numbers of people can be used for contact tracing and movement monitoring during COVID-19.

Government implements Shekatkar Committee recommendations related to creating border infrastructure

- Union Government has implemented **Lt. General D B Shekatkar Committee's** recommendations related to creating **border infrastructure**. These were related to speeding up road construction leading to socio-economic development in the border areas.
- On the matter related to creating border infrastructure, the Centre has implemented recommendation to outsource road construction work beyond optimal capacity of **Border Roads Organization**. It has been made mandatory to adopt **Engineering Procurement Contract (EPC)** mode for execution of all works costing more than 100 crore rupees.
- The other recommendation relating to introduction of modern construction plants, equipment and machinery has been implemented by delegating enhanced procurement powers from 7.5 crore rupees to 100 crore rupees to BRO, for domestic and foreign procurements.
- New Technology like blasting technology for precision blasting, use of Geo-Textiles for soil stabilization, cementitious base for pavements, plastic coated aggregates for surfacing, is also being used to enhance the pace of construction. With the empowerment of field officers through enhanced delegation of financial and administrative powers, there has been significant improvement in faster financial closure of works.

Centre reduces EPFO contributions from 12 per cent to 10 per cent from May to July this year

- The Centre has notified the reduction in **statutory rate** of contributions from **12 per cent to 10 per cent** for wage months period from **May to July, 2020** for all class of establishments covered under the **Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.

- It stated, reduction in rate of EPF contributions from 12 per cent to 10 percent of basic wages and Dearness allowances is intended to benefit both 4.3 Crore employees and employers of 6.5 lakhs establishments to tide over the immediate liquidity crisis to some extent.
- As a result of reduction in statutory rate of contributions, the employee will have a higher take home pay and employers will also have their liabilities reduced by 2 per cent of wages of the employees.
- The Ministry stated, this reduction of rate of contribution is not applicable to establishments like Central and State Public Sector enterprises or any other establishment owned or controlled by or under control of the Central or State Government.
- These establishments shall continue to contribute 12 per cent of basic wages and dearness allowances. The reduced rate is also not applicable for Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana-PMGKY beneficiaries as the entire employees' EPF contributions of 12 per cent of wages and employers' EPF & EPS contribution of 12 per cent of wages totaling 24 per cent of the monthly wages is being contributed by the Central Government.

Coir geo-textiles to be used in rural road construction under PMGSY-III

- The government stated **Coir geo-textiles** will be used in the **construction of rural roads** under the third phase of **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-III)**.
- Coir geo-textiles are permeable fabric, which are natural, strong, highly durable, resistant to rots, moulds and moisture, and free from any microbial attack.
- They will be used for construction of rural roads under the PMGSY-III, according to a communication from the **National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency under Union Ministry of Rural Development**.
- As per the PMGSY new technology guidelines for road construction, 15 per cent length of roads in each batch of proposals is to be constructed using new technologies. Out of this 5 per cent roads are to be constructed using Indian Roads Congress (IRC) accredited technology.
- As per these instructions, 5 per cent length of the rural roads under PMGSY-III will be constructed using coir geo-textiles.
- Accordingly, 164 km of road will be constructed using coir geo-textiles in Andhra Pradesh, 151 km in Gujarat, 71 km in Kerala, 328 km in Maharashtra, 470 km in Odisha, 369 km in Tamil Nadu and 121 km in Telengana.
- Thus, **1,674 km road** will be constructed using **coir geo-textiles in seven states** for which there will be a requirement of **one crore sq mtr of coir geo-textiles**, estimated cost of which would come to **Rs 70 crore**.

Defence Ministry approves procurement of 26 defence items from local suppliers to boost 'Make in India'

- **Ministry of Defence** has approved procurement of **26 defence items** only from local suppliers to boost **Make in India**. The government has issued Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order 2017 to encourage Make in India and to promote manufacturing and production of goods and services in India.
- Under this order, Department of Defence Production (DDP) has so far notified 127 items where purchase preference is given to local suppliers. In order to further encourage procurement from local suppliers, 26 items out of 127 already notified, have now been notified under the related clause of the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order.
- Therefore, procuring entities shall procure these items only from local suppliers, irrespective of purchase value, provided that the local suppliers meet the Minimum Local Content (MLC) as prescribed for each item.

Cabinet approves Rs 20,050cr Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana for boosting fisheries sector

- The Cabinet has approved the **"Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana - A scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India"** with highest ever investment of **Rs. 20050 crores** in fisheries sector comprising of **Central share of Rs. 9407 crore, State share of Rs 4880 crore and Beneficiaries contribution of Rs. 5763 crore.**
- PMMSY will be implemented over a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 in all States/Union Territories.
- The objective of PMMSY is to create direct employment opportunities to 15 lakh people in the sector, double income of fish farmers and workers by 2024 besides addressing the critical gaps in the fisheries sector and increase fish production to 22 million tonne by 2024-25 through sustainable and responsible fishing practices.
- The scheme will focus on creating critical infrastructure including modernisation and strengthening of value chain and improve availability of certified quality fish seed and feed, traceability in fish and including effective aquatic health management.
- It will give a boost to investments in the fisheries sector and increase the competitiveness of fish and fisheries products.
- PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely **Central Sector scheme (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).**
- However under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, non-beneficiary oriented project costs will be shared between the centre and state. The centre will provide 100 per cent funding for projects undertaken in union territories, but in hilly states it would be in the ratio of 90:10, while for other states 60:40.
- For beneficiary oriented projects, the funding will be limited to 40 per cent of the project cost for general category and 60 per cent for backward caste people and women. For which, the fund will be shared in the ration of 90:10 for hilly states, 60:40 for other states and 100 per cent for union territories.

Union HRD Minister launches IGNOU's Online MA Hindi Programme

- Human Resource Development Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** has launched **IGNOU's Online Programme, MA (Hindi)** through **Facebook Live session.**
- Apart from MA in Hindi, the university has also launched programmes in MA in Gandhi and Peace Studies, BA in Tourism Studies, certificate course in Arabic, certificate in information technology, certificate programme in Library and Information Science.
- The session was broadcast live through IGNOU's Gyan Darshan TV Channel, Gyan Dhara, and Facebook page.

Textiles Ministry releases a list of labs equipped to conduct test and certification of PPE Body coveralls

- **Textiles Ministry** has released a list of laboratories equipped to conduct test and certification of **Synthetic Blood Penetration Resistance Test** required for Body coveralls for COVID 19.
- All testing, certification, and quality control procedures required in connection with PPE Body coveralls can be conducted in these laboratories. These include Small Arms Factory in Kanpur, Laboratory of Textiles Committee in Mumbai, and Heavy Vehicles Factory in Tamil Nadu.

Cabinet approves Scheme for Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises

- **Union Cabinet** gave its approval to a **new Centrally Sponsored Scheme** named **Scheme for Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises** for the **Unorganized Sector** on All India basis with an outlay of **Rs. 10 thousand crore.** The expenditure will be shared by Centre and the States in ratio of **60:40.**
- The objectives of the scheme is to increase in access to finance by micro food processing units, increase in revenues of target enterprises, enhanced compliance with food quality and safety standards, strengthening

capacities of support systems and transition from the unorganized sector to the formal sector, special focus on women entrepreneurs and aspirational districts, encourage Waste to Wealth activities and focus on minor forest produce in tribal districts.

- Scheme will be implemented over a five-year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25 and two lakh micro-enterprises are to be assisted with credit linked subsidy.
- Micro enterprises will get credit linked subsidy at 35 per cent of the eligible project cost with ceiling of Rs. 10 lakh.
- Beneficiary contribution will be minimum 10 per cent and balance from loan. There will be on-site skill training and Handholding for DPR and technical upgradation.
- The scheme will be rolled out on All India basis. Seed capital will be given to SHGs (Rs. four lakh per SHG) for loan to members for working capital and small tools.
- Grant will be provided to FPOs for backward/forward linkages, common infrastructure, packaging, marketing and branding.
- The scheme would be monitored at Centre by an Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee under the Chairmanship of Minister, Food Processing Industries.

Centre launches scheme to solarise entire Konark Temple, Konark town

- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has launched a **scheme for solarisation of Konark Sun Temple and Konark town in Odisha**.
- The Government of India launched the scheme with an objective to develop the historical Sun temple town of Konark in Odisha as 'Surya Nagri', to convey a message of synergy between the modern use of solar energy and the ancient Sun Temple and the importance of promoting solar energy.
- The scheme envisages setting up of the 10-MW grid connected solar project and various solar off-grid applications such as solar trees, solar drinking water kiosks and off-grid solar power plants with battery storage, with a 100 per cent central financial assistance (CFA) support of around Rs. 25 crore from the Government of India through the MNRE.
- Implementation of this project will be done by the Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA).
- The scheme will meet all the energy requirements of Konark town with solar energy.

Centre clears OIL plans for drilling in Assam's Dibru Saikhowa Park

- **Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change** accorded environment clearance for extension of **drilling for hydrocarbon exploration** inside **Dibru Saikhowa National Park** in eastern **Assam**.
- The clearance for extension drilling and testing at seven locations under the national park was given as part of the Centre's target to reduce 10% imports and the Northeast Vision 2030.
- In order to tap the hydrocarbon resources underneath the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, OIL had approached statutory bodies for obtaining necessary permissions in 2016 on the basis of the **Extended Reach Drilling (ERD) technology**, which will enable OIL to drill for hydrocarbon without drilling inside the national park.
- The ERD techniques are extensively used to intersect hydrocarbon targets far from the surface or areas of the reservoir which otherwise are difficult to access.

Govt extends 'Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana' by 3 years till March 2023

- The Union Cabinet extended the **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**, a social security scheme for senior citizens, for **three years till March, 2023**.

- The PMVVY scheme, implemented through the **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)**, is intended to give an assured minimum pension to senior citizens (**60 years and above**) based on an assured return on the purchase price/subscription amount.
- The assured rate of return for fiscal 2020-21 has been pegged at 7.4 per cent per annum and thereafter to be reset every year, an official release stated after the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decided to extend the scheme for a further period of three years up to March 31, 2023. Earlier, the scheme offered an assured return of 8 per cent.
- Government's financial liability is limited to the extent of the difference between the market return generated by LIC and the guaranteed return of 7.4 per cent per annum initially for the year 2020-21, and thereafter to be reset every year in line with Senior Citizens Saving Scheme (SCSS).
- The average expected financial liability for the subsidy reimbursement, calculated for annuity payment on actual basis, is expected to be Rs.614 crore per year for currency of the scheme, it added.
- The actual interest-gap (subsidy) would however depend upon the actual experience in terms of number of new policies issued, the quantum of investment made by subscribers, actual returns generated and the basis of annuity payment, the release stated.

Prakash Javadekar launches NBA-UNDP India's Biodiversity Samrakshan Internship Programme

- **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar** launched NBA-UNDP India's Biodiversity **Samrakshan Internship Programme** and addressed the virtual celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity
- On the occasion, he launched the **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** and **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Biodiversity Samrakshan Internship Programme** which proposes to engage 20 students with postgraduate degrees for a period of one year through an open, transparent, online competitive process.
- The programme wishes to engage dynamic and creative students, who are willing to learn about natural resource management and biodiversity conservation and to support the projects of NBA in various states and Union Territories and to technically assist the State Biodiversity Boards in discharge of their mandates.
- The virtual event also saw the launch of UNEP Campaign on Illegal Trafficking of Endangered Species: 'Not all Animals Migrate by Choice'. Illegal trade in wildlife carries the risk of spreading dangerous pandemics, it was emphasised.
- The campaign, launched by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau with UNEP, seeks to address these environmental challenges, to raise awareness, and to advocate solutions.
- An awareness campaign supported by WWF to highlight the crucial role played by nature through its free ecological services provided for humankind was also launched during the course of the event.

High-level panel formed to recommend reforms in India's drug regulatory system

- A **high-level committee** of experts has been formed by the government to recommend reforms in **India's drug regulatory system** so that approval processes can be fast-tracked.
- According to a recent Union Health Ministry order, the committee will study the current drug regulatory system and submit recommendations for reforms, so as to bring the system in line with global standards and make it more efficient.
- The committee chaired by **Rajesh Bhushan**, the OSD to the Union health minister.

- India's Joint Drug Controller **Dr Eswara Reddy** will assist the committee in their work on adopting global best practices. The committee, which has met twice till now, will submit its report within one month from the date of its formation.
- The committee has been asked by the ministry to also study earlier reports given by the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on clinical trials and working of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization CDSCO and address the unimplemented recommendations of the previous panels.

India's KHUDOL declared one of Top 10 Global Initiatives to fight COVID-19

- **United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth** has listed **Manipur's Khudol (gift)** among the top 10 global initiatives for an inclusive fight against the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Khudol** is a crowdfunded initiative of **Ya_All**, an Imphal-based NGO that had created India's first transgender football team. The initiative entails ensuring food, health and hygiene of the LGBTQI+ community, people living with HIV, daily-wage earners, children and adolescents.
- Mobilising a network of 100 volunteers, they have provided around 2,000 families and individuals with over 1,000 health kits, 6,500 sanitary pads and 1,500 condoms," stated Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka, the UN Envoy on Youth.
- Ms. Wickramanayake also acknowledged Ya_All, which was founded in 2017, for organising mental health workshops and founding Meitram, the first co-working and networking space owned and run by queer individuals in India.
- Manipur has also been more accommodative to the transgender community than other States during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, ensuring that they were not put into quarantine centres for men.
- Ya_All created a model of an inclusive safe space for transgender returnees. The organisation teamed up with the local Thangmeiband United Club and Imphal West district administration to set provide separate rooms and toilets for transgender persons besides a ramp for the differently-abled at a quarantine centre in Imphal's DM College of Teacher's Education.

Fmr SC judge Justice Sikri inaugurates Indian Dispute Resolution Centre

- Former Supreme Court judge Justice **A K Sikri** has inaugurated the **Indian Dispute Resolution Centre (IDRC)**, which provides a paperless dispute resolution environment.
- The e-inauguration of IDRC adding that the centre offers offline as well as **e-alternate dispute resolution (ADR)** facility through its state-of-the-art e-arbitration, e-mediation and e-conciliation software portal.
- It provides a completely paperless dispute resolution environment. Its arbitration panel has former judges of the Supreme Court, High Courts, district courts apart from senior advocates, former bureaucrats, chartered accountants, architects, corporate leaders among others.
- **Justice Sikri, who is also the International Judge, Singapore International Commercial Court.**
- The e-inauguration was followed by a panel discussion on "Adhoc v. Institutional Dispute Resolution".
- This dispute resolution centre has been established by young enthusiasts, young blood coming in with new approach.
- India has improved its ranking in World Bank EoDB Report, 2020 in ease of doing business from 164 to 6 but raised the issue of slack performance in enforcement of contract where the country's position is still 161 out of 191 Nations.

Nitin Gadkari inaugurates breakthrough event of Chamba Tunnel under 'Chardham Pariyojana'

- **Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari** inaugurated an event of **Chamba Tunnel** under **Chardham Pariyojana** through video conference.
- Under the project, **the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has been constructing 250 km of National Highways leading to holy shrine Gangotri and Badrinath.
- BRO achieved this major milestone by digging up a **440 m long Tunnel** below the busy Chamba town on Rishikesh-Dharasu road Highway (NH 94).
- BRO is a key stake holder in prestigious Chardham project and breakthrough of this tunnel has been achieved by Team Shivalik.
- Latest Austrian technology has been used in its construction. The tunnel will be through for traffic by October this year, almost three months before its scheduled date of completion.

Webinar on “Van Dhan Scheme organized by DST, Rajasthan in association with TRIFED, M/O Tribal Affairs: learnings for post COVID-19”

- A Webinar under **Know Your Scheme-Lecture Series** on “**Van Dhan Yojana : Learning For Post Covid-19**” was organized by the **Department of Science and Technology, Government of Rajasthan** in association with **Trifed**, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India
- The current crisis situation due to Covid-19 has posed an unprecedented threat across the country. Almost all the States and UTs in India are affected by it, in varying degrees. The situation has also dealt a blow to the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized communities. The tribal gatherers can be one of the worst affected in these trying times, since this is the peak season for harvesting Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) in many regions.
- The biggest challenge for tribal artisans, however, is to market their products effectively and make more people aware of the top quality items they develop. **TRIFED** (under Ministry of Tribal Affairs) has been playing an instrumental role in this regard by procuring tribal-made products and selling them to the masses in India and worldwide under the banner of **TRIBES India**.
- They have launched a **#GoTribal campaign** and are growing from strength to strength via opening up of over 120 permanent outlets across the country (including airports), ecommerce platforms, exhibitions, organizing grand ‘Aadi Mahotsavs; and entering into tie-ups for providing training to the artisans for further capacity building, quality improvement and market alignment.

One Sun One World One Grid’: India initiates talks on West to SE Asia solar grid

- India has come up with a ‘**One Sun One World One Grid**’ (OSOWOG) initiative to set up a framework for facilitating global cooperation in this regard aiming at building a global ecosystem of interconnected renewable energy resources that can be seamlessly shared.
- The Union Ministry of New and Renewable energy (MNRE), through this initiative, plans to build global consensus about sharing solar resources among more than 140 countries of West Asia and South East Asia.
- At a later stage, the project envisages getting this grid interconnected with the African power pools.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in October 2019, had floated the idea of cross-border solar connectivity. India has already initiated the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which aims to deploy over 1,000 GW of solar generation capacity globally and mobilise investment of over \$1 trillion towards by 2030.
- The ISA, a treaty-based inter-governmental organisation headquartered in Gurgaon, was established following the Paris Declaration as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries

Revision Points

Portfolio	Union Minister	Constituency
Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions	Narendra Modi	Varanasi
Ministry of Defence	Rajnath Singh	Lucknow
Ministry of Home Affairs	Amit Shah	Gandhinagar
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways & Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises	Nitin Gadkari	Nagpur
Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers	DV Sadananda Gowda	Bangalore North
Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Corporate Affairs	Nirmala Sitharaman	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Ram Vilas Paswan	NA
Ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Narendra Singh Tomar	Morena
Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of communications & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Ravi Shankar Prasad	Patna Sahib
Ministry of Food Processing Industries	Harsimrat Kaur Badal	Bathinda
Ministry of Social justice and empowerment	Thaawar Chand Gehlot	RS (Madhya Pradesh)
Ministry of External Affairs	Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	RS (Gujarat)
Ministry of Human Resource Development	Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'	Haridwar
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Arjun Munda	Khunti
Ministry of Women and child Development & Ministry of Textiles	Smriti Zubin Irani	Amethi
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Science and Technology & Ministry of Earth Sciences	Dr Harsh Vardhan	Chandni Chowk
Ministry of environment, forest and climate change & Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise	Prakash Javadekar	RS (Madhya Pradesh)
Ministry of Railways & Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Piyush Goyal	RS (Maharashtra)

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Ministry of Steel	Dharmendra Pradhan	RS (Madhya Pradesh)
Ministry of Minority Affairs	Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi	RS (Jharkhand)
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of coal & Ministry of Mines	Pralhad Joshi	Dharwad
Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey	Chandauli
Ministry of Animal Husbandry, dairying and fisheries	Giriraj Singh	Begusarai

Important International News

Japan to Support ADB Developing Member Countries' Response to COVID-19 Challenges

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has provided several targeted interventions to support its developing member countries (DMCs) in combating the effects of the **novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)** pandemic from its early stages.
- In support of ADB's effort, the Government of Japan is committed to providing emergency support of **\$150 million** through the **Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR)** and the **Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund (APDRF)** to help DMCs strengthen their capacity to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- Following a \$6.5 billion initial package, ADB announced on 13 April to triple the size of its response by adding \$13.5 billion in resources to help its DMCs counter the severe macroeconomic and health impacts caused by COVID-19. The \$20 billion package includes about \$2.5 billion in concessional and grant resources. Japan's contribution is on top of the package.
- ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

Russia to Launch First Satellite For Monitoring Arctic Climate This Year

- **Russia** will launch its **first Arktika-M satellite** for monitoring the **Arctic climate** and environment at the end of the year, General Director of the Lavochkin aerospace company Vladimir Kolmykov stated.
- As of now, the number one **Arktika-M spacecraft** has been developed and is undergoing radio-electronic testing ... the launch is planned for the end of 2020", Kolmykov stated, adding that the second Arktika-M satellite is still under development and will be launched in **2023**.
- In February, a space industry source stated that the launch of the first Arktika-M satellite from the Baikonur space centre was planned for 9 December 2020. According to the source, the satellite will be launched using a Soyuz-2.1b carrier rocket with the Fregat booster.
- The launch of the second Russian satellite for weather forecasting and monitoring climate and the environment in the Arctic region, Arktika-M, has been postponed to 2023 from 2021, according to documents of Russia space corporation Roscosmos published on the public procurement website.
- Russia's Arktika-M remote-sensing and emergency communications satellites will gather meteorological data in the polar regions of the Earth, which will allow to improve weather forecasts and will enable scientists to better study climate change.

Iran's currency is set to get a new name — and lose four zeros

- The head of Iran's Central Bank announced the nation's currency was set to be **re-named and re-valued**.
- Iran's money **rial** will soon likely be called the **Toman**, and an impressive four zeros will be shaved off all denominations.
- The **10,000 rials** will become **one Toman**.
- The bill to remove four zeros from the national currency was approved by lawmakers. The bill needs to be approved by the clerical body that vets legislation before it takes effect.
- The idea of removing four zeros has been floated since 2008, but gained strength after 2018, when U.S. President Donald Trump exited Iran's 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions, as the rial lost more than 60% of its value.
- The Iranian currency was trading at about 156,000 rials per dollar on the unofficial market.
- Iran's weak currency and high inflation have led to street protests since late 2017.

UN launches USD 6.7 bn global appeal to fight COVID-19

- **United Nations** and partner agencies have launched a **6.7 billion US dollar** global appeal to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, more than trebling an earlier appeal made by the UN chief, with special focus on more vulnerable countries and combating food insecurity and gender-based violence.
- The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator **Mark Lowcock** launched the appeal and a global plan to fight the COVID-19 in fragile countries.
- Mr. Lowcock stated that while the virus has now affected every country and almost every person on the planet, the most devastating and destabilizing impacts will be felt in the world's poorest countries.
- The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan was launched on **March 25th**, but with humanitarian needs rising, the plan is calling for an injection of 6.7 billion US dollars for the remainder of **2020**.
- The plan includes nine more vulnerable countries, beyond the 54 covered in the original appeal and plans to respond to the growth in food insecurity.

ADB approves \$500 million for Bangladesh's COVID-19 response

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** approved an additional **500 million dollar loan** to bolster the efforts of **Bangladesh government** to manage the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy and public health.
- This package will build on ADB's ongoing collaboration with Bangladesh on structural reforms by supporting government efforts to speed up the country's social and economic recovery, stated ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.
- The loan is expected to benefit over 15 million poor and vulnerable people in Bangladesh. Around 1.5 million workers, mostly women, in export-oriented industries will receive extended salary support while doctors, nurses and medical workers fighting COVID-19 in government-run hospitals will receive special honorarium.
- The government's social protection programmes for people of old-age and women in distress will be expanded to cover all eligible senior citizens and women in the 100 poorest local government units in the country.
- On April 30, ADB approved a 100 million dollar concessional loan to support Bangladesh in its efforts to address the immediate public health requirements of combating the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ADB also released a 350,000 dollar emergency grant for the procurement of medical supplies and equipment, and 1.3 million dollars from an existing project to provide one-time cash support to 22,619 trainees to enable them to continue their ongoing skills training programme.

China's new space capsule lands safely to end 1st uncrewed test flight

- **China's next-generation crew** capsule successfully returned to Earth (May 8) after nearly three days in orbit.
- The capsule, which has not yet been named, launched on a **Long March 5B rocket** on May 5 on an uncrewed test flight that represents an important step toward China's goal of building a space station in orbit.
- Having spent two days and 19 hours orbiting Earth, according to a statement from China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, a state-owned contractor for the space agency.
- During its flight, the capsule executed seven trajectory maneuvers, reaching a maximum altitude of about 5,000 miles (8,000 kilometers). The landing procedure began about two hours before touchdown and tested important components like the heat shield, parachutes and air cushions.
- The capsule is designed to hold six or seven astronauts at a time and is meant to facilitate exploration in low Earth orbit and beyond; the capsule could one day carry astronauts to the moon, according to Chinese government news service Xinhua.
- The capsule and its cylindrical service module together stand about 30 feet (9 meters) tall and nearly 15 feet (4.5 m) wide.

World Bank approves USD 400 mn loan to help Afghanistan deal with COVID-19 crisis

- The World **Bank** approved a **USD 400 million** grant to help Afghanistan "sustain the pace of key economic and public finance reforms and support the country to manage current risks and uncertainties compounded by the **COVID-19 crisis**."
- The Incentive Program Development Policy Grant comprises USD 160 million from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank Group's fund for the poorest countries and USD240 million from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), managed by the World Bank on behalf of 34 donors, the bank stated in a statement.
- This assistance will help Afghanistan maintain its reform momentum throughout a difficult period and provide vital financial support to the government to manage revenue shortfalls arising from coronavirus impacts. The pandemic has had an immediate negative impact on Afghanistan.
- Border closures have severely impacted government customs receipts, while measures to contain the spread of the virus are likely to have a strong negative impact on economic activity. Poverty remains deep and widespread, while security and political uncertainties continue, stated the statement.

UN Agencies Release Commemorative Stamp On 40th Anniversary Of Smallpox Eradication

- **The WHO** and the **UN's postal agency** have released a **commemorative postage stamp** on the **40th anniversary of the eradication of smallpox**, with the head of the global health body expressing gratitude to a top Indian-origin UN official Mr Atul Khare.
- The commemorative stamp was designed and developed by **Sergio Baradat**, United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) in collaboration with WHO.
- In May 1980, the 33rd World Health Assembly issued its official declaration that "the world and all its peoples have won freedom from smallpox."
- When WHO's smallpox eradication campaign was launched in 1967, one of the ways countries raised awareness about smallpox was through postage stamps.
- The stamp recognises the global solidarity in fighting smallpox and honours millions of people working together, from world leaders and international organisations to rural doctors and community health workers, to eradicate smallpox.

Israel Names Street After Rabindranath Tagore On The Poet's 159th Birthday

- **Israel** has named a **street in Tel Aviv** after celebrated **Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore** as a tribute on his **159th birthday**.
- On **May 7**, the Israeli Embassy in India tweeted a photo of a signboard where the street was named **Rehov Tagore**; 'rehov' means street.
- Tagore, who wrote his poetry, novels, stories and plays in Bengali, In 1913 he won the prestigious Nobel prize in literature and till now, he is the only poet from India to have done so.
- The poet also composed the poem that later became the national anthem of India. Interestingly, the national anthem of Bangladesh, 'Amar Sonar Bangla', was also written by the same Bengali poet.

CDC of the US commits \$3.6 million to India

- To help in fighting the spread of the global pandemic COVID-19, the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** has committed **\$3.6 million** to the Indian government.
- According to an official statement from the US Embassy in New Delhi, the first tranche of funding is going to help in further strengthening India's efforts to increase laboratory capacity for **SARS-COV-2** testing, and also help in molecular diagnostics and serology.
- The funds are also meant to be used to support the development of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) centres of excellence. These centres are expected to help in improving the ability of the hospital networks to detect COVID-19 and to help in strengthening local health systems through enhanced surveillance and monitoring systems.
- Also, the CDC will work with local partners and assist them in developing a strong public health workforce which will help in responding to future threats too. And there are plans to help provide technical assistance to the government in the ongoing crisis and risk communication efforts. In addition, the CDC India program will provide technical assistance for the Government of India's ongoing crisis emergency and risk communication efforts.

International tourism may decline by 60-80% in 2020

- **International tourism** could shrink by **60-80 per cent** in **2020** due to the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the **revenue loss of \$910 billion** to \$1.2 trillion and placing millions of livelihoods at risk, according to the **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**.
- According to the **UN's specialised agency**, the pandemic has already caused a **22 per cent fall** in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020.
- This places millions of livelihoods at risk and threatens to roll back progress made in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labour-intensive sectors of the economy.

Deforestation rate globally declined between 2015 and 2020

- The rate of forest loss in **2015-2020** declined to an estimated **10 million hectares (mha)**, down from **12 million hectares (mha)** in **2010-2015**, according to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 (FRA 2020).
- The FRA 2020 was released by the **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**.
- The world lost 178 mha of forest since 1990, an area the size of Libya.
- However, the rate of net forest loss decreased substantially during 1990–2020 due to a reduction in deforestation in some countries, plus increases in forest area in others through afforestation and the natural expansion of forests.
- The rate of net forest loss declined from 7.8 mha per year in the decade 1990–2000 to 5.2 mha per year in 2000–2010 and 4.7 mha per year in 2010–2020.

- Among the world's regions, **Africa** had the **largest annual rate** of net forest loss in 2010–2020, at 3.9 mha, followed by South America, at 2.6 mha.
- On the other hand, **Asia** had the **highest net gain of forest area** in 2010–2020, followed by Oceania and Europe.
- However, both Europe and Asia recorded substantially lower rates of net gain in 2010–2020 than in 2000–2010.
- Oceania experienced net losses of forest area in the decades 1990–2000 and 2000–2010.
- The world's total forest area was 4.06 billion hectares (bha), which was 31 per cent of the total land area. This area was equivalent to 0.52 ha per person.
- The **largest proportion of the world's forests** were **tropical (45 per cent)**, followed by boreal, temperate and subtropical.
- More than 54 per cent of the world's forests were in only five countries — the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America and China.
- The area of naturally regenerating forests worldwide decreased since 1990, but the area of planted forests increased by 123 mha. The rate of increase in the area of planted forest slowed in the last ten years.
- Plantation forests cover about 131 mha — three per cent of the global forest area and 45 per cent of the total area of planted forests.
- The **highest per cent of plantation forests** were in **South America** while the lowest were in Europe.
- There are an estimated 726 mha of forests in protected areas worldwide. South America had the highest share of forests in protected areas, at 31 per cent.
- The area of forest in protected areas globally increased by 191 mha since 1990, but the rate of annual increase slowed in 2010–2020.

Kokeshi dolls one of Japan's popular cultural icons

- Japanese **Kokeshi dolls**, one of the oldest forms of dolls in the world, have become a **famous icon of Japanese culture**.
- Made from a single piece of wood, these dolls are made in a variety of styles, ranging from traditional designs to modern cultural references.
- Wooden doll is made all around the world. However European dolls have hand, leg, mouth and other facial features whereas Japanese Kokeshi doll does not have sculptured feature rather it inspires imagination, a Kokeshi-maker stated.
- The Kokeshi doll has been manufactured in the same way for hundreds of years.
- Though there is a variety of trees, the most common type is the cherry tree, which does not get affected by moisture and is very dense. Therefore, it is perfect for the sculpturing process.
- Dolls consist of head, body and base and are made with the same old technique, which includes carving the wood quickly and then forming it with drilling metal tool. The most common shape is either spherical or cylindrical.
- In the past, all the decorations were painted with hot ember. Now, Kokeshi doll has become the most famous gift from Japan and many tourists are keen to acquire it.
- Though Kokeshi doll was introduced as a toy for kids, but it has become an integral part of Japanese culture.

Japan launches new unit to step up defence in outer space

- **Japan** launched its **new space defence unit** to monitor and counter threats to the country's satellites.
- The Space Operations Squadron, part of Japan's **Air Self-Defence Force**, starts with 20 members and is expected to grow to about 100 members once the unit is fully operational in **2023**

- The role of the unit is mainly to monitor and protect Japanese satellites from enemy attacks or space debris. It will also conduct satellite-based navigation and communications for other troops in the field.
- The launch of the new unit comes amid growing Japanese concern that China and Russia are seeking ways to interfere, disable or destroy satellites.

Nepal to publish maps showing India's Kalapani, Lipulekh as its territory

- The **Nepal government** decided to publish new maps showing **Lipulekh and Kalapani**, the subject of disputes with India, as part of Nepalese territory amid an escalating border row between the two countries.
- The decision to show **Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani** was made at a meeting of the council of ministers chaired by **Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli**.
- Nepal's foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali had decided to publish a new map of the country showing the seven provinces, 77 districts and 753 local administrative divisions, including "Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani".
- The official map will be published soon by the land management ministry.
- Defence minister Rajnath Singh recently opened the 80-km road that ends at Lipulekh Pass. It was built so that pilgrims going to Kailash-Mansarovar can avoid dangerous high-altitude routes through Sikkim and Nepal.

India gives \$2 million aid to UN agency working for Palestinian refugees

- **India** has given **\$2 million** in aid to the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency** working for the welfare of **Palestinian refugees** in support of its core programmes and services, including education and health, amidst the coronavirus crisis.
- India had increased its annual contribution to the **UNRWA** from **\$1.25 million** in 2016 to **\$5 million** in 2019. It pledged another \$5 million for 2020 which opens its way to become a member of the agency's advisory commission, according to official sources.
- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) applauded India's financial support to keep its basic services operating, especially under the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- India's contribution will support the agency's "dire" financial situation due to the funding gaps that risk its core services to the Palestinian refugees in the fields of education and health.
- About 3.1 million Palestine refugees depend on health services provided by the UNRWA. At the same time, the agency's schools educate 526,000 students every year, of which half are female.
- The agency was created in December 1949 by the UN to support the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees.
- The UNRWA definition of "refugee" covers Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 War.

UNICEF, Airtel Africa to support children, families affected by Covid-19

- **UNICEF** has entered into a partnership with **Airtel Africa** to provide children with access to **remote learning** and enable access to **cash assistance** for their **families** via mobile cash transfers.
- Under this partnership, UNICEF and Airtel Africa will use mobile technology to benefit an estimated 133 million school age children currently affected by school closures in 13 countries across sub-Saharan Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- UNICEF and Airtel Africa's partnership aims to benefit children and families in 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

- UNICEF is partnering with Airtel Africa to deliver better outcomes for children and families affected by widespread closures.
- The partnership will also provide UNICEF with a means to facilitate vital cash assistance to alleviate financial barriers for some of the most vulnerable families across the region, including many affected by the growing socio-economic hardships resulting from suspension of income earning activities. This will help ensure families have additional resources to cope with the ongoing health and economic crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Estonia starts testing digital immunity passport for workplaces

- **Estonia** has started to test one of the world's **first digital immunity passports**, created by a team including founders of global tech startups Transferwise and Bolt, seeking a safer return to workplaces following the coronavirus lockdown.
- A digital immunity passport collects testing data and enables people to share their **immunity status** with a third party, like an employer, using a temporary QR-code generated after digital authentication.
- Digital immunity passport aims to diminish fears and stimulate societies all over the globe to move on with their lives amidst the pandemic, stated Taavet Hinrikus, founder of Transferwise and a member of Back to Work, the non-governmental organisation developing the passport.
- Many countries and businesses are rushing to develop apps for contact-tracing.
- In addition to technology entrepreneurs, Back to Work includes local medical experts and state officials. Radisson hotels and food producer PRFoods are among the first companies that have started to test the passport.

Australian researchers achieve world's fastest Internet speeds

- Researchers from Monash, Swinburne, and RMIT universities of **Australia** have successfully tested and recorded the **world's fastest internet data speed**. The researchers achieved this from a single optical chip – capable of downloading 1000 high definition movies in a split second, as per the Swinburne Institute's official release.
- The breakthrough finding can help Australia to bolster its telecommunications capacity for the next 25 years. This can also be rolled out across the world.
- This technology has the capacity to support the **high-speed internet connections** of 1.8 million households in Melbourne. This can also address the problem of virtual jams across the world during peak periods.
- Researchers achieved these quick speeds using existing communications infrastructure where they were able to efficiently load-test the network.
- They used a new device called **micro-comb** that replaces 80 lasers, which is smaller and lighter than existing telecommunications hardware. It was planted into and load-tested using existing infrastructure, which mirrors that used by the NBN.
- It is the first time any micro-comb has been used in a field trial and possesses the highest amount of data produced from a single optical chip.

U.S. to pull out of Open Skies treaty

- The **United States** stated it would withdraw from the **35-nation Open Skies treaty** allowing unarmed surveillance flights over member countries, the Trump administration's latest move to pull the country out of a major global treaty.
- The administration stated Russia had repeatedly violated the pact's terms. Senior officials stated the pullout would formally take place in six months, but President Donald Trump held out the possibility that Russia could come into compliance.

- His decision deepens doubts about whether Washington will seek to extend the 2010 New START accord, which imposes the last remaining limits on U.S. and Russian deployments of strategic nuclear arms to no more than 1,550 each. It expires in February.
- Mr. Trump's arms control negotiator mounted a full-blown defense of the administration's arms control policies, focusing on the president's proposal that China join the United States and Russia on a replacement for New START.
- The Open Skies treaty, proposed by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in 1955, was signed in 1992 and took effect in 2002. The idea is to let member nations make surveillance flights over each other's countries to build trust.
- The officials cited a years-long effort by Russia to violate the terms, such as by restricting U.S. overflights of Russia's neighbour Georgia and the Russian military enclave in Kaliningrad on the Baltic coast.
- In addition, they stated Russia had been using its own overflights of American and European territory to identify critical U.S. infrastructure for potential attack in time of war.

World Bank approves USD 500 million loan for Pakistan

- The **World Bank** has restored **Pakistan's budgetary support** after four years and approved a policy loan of **USD 500 million** to help the cash-strapped country mitigate adverse impact of the **coronavirus pandemic**, according to a media report.
- The World Bank's board of executive directors approved a USD 500-million programme to help Pakistan improve access to quality healthcare and education, support economic opportunities for women and strengthen social safety nets as the country braces to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- World Bank has decided to help Pakistan once again after four years. This decision has been taken to help the country out of a major economy crisis allegedly caused due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- The money is to help the country get better access to quality healthcare and education, support economic opportunities for women and strengthen social safety nets as the country braces to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan has been given 30 years to return the money back to World Bank.
- The World Bank documents underlined that the government had committed to staying the course and would be supported by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to ensure that.

India builds state-of-the-art training facility for Ugandan defence forces

- The **Indian Association Uganda (IAU)**, in association with the Indian Military Advisory and Training Team there, handed over a **state-of-the-art military training facility** to **Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF)**. The war game centre, named '**INDIA**', was inaugurated by Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, the Army stated.
- The centre was conceptualised by the Indian Military Team and constructed by the IAU at a cost of **over 1 billion Ugandan shillings** or **\$2,65,000**. The cost of the project was funded voluntarily by Ugandans of Indian origin that will help make the centre's region a long-lasting symbol of the special bond that both the countries share.
- The center will not only help the college but also strongly support UPDF's transformation. In addition to Uganda, the East African region will also get benefitted in training peacekeeping troops that would cross the continent and beyond.
- The IAU donated a vehicle and other equipment to the Uganda to help in medical services during the battle against coronavirus (COVID-19).

UAE-based Secure Cam to launch surveillance campaign in India

- **Secure Cam IT Solutions**, UAE-based security surveillance and IT solutions, has plans to install around 10,000 cameras for free in one city of about **150 countries** by **2025** as part of the **\$1.5-billion worldwide campaign** announced in October last.
- The company has earmarked about **Rs.200 crore** for the project in India, stated Chairman and CEO Rijoy Thomas.
- The global campaign '**Secure Our City**' was postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The campaign was scheduled on April 20, and has been postponed to September.
- '**Secure Our City**' campaign will be launched in India across five cities in a phased manner.
- An each CCTV unit, which the company provided includes an eight-channel HD IP camera system with 30 days of recording capacity. 'Secure Cam' is also offering installation, a two-year warranty, and one year service for free as part of the campaign.
- The company had already started its operations in Kochi under the name 'Secure Cam India'. Apart from Kochi, the company has also started operations in Bengaluru.
- In UAE and GCC countries, Secure Cam is working closely with the companies in the security sector. There are also plans to launch its own newly-developed branded products in new markets.

Donald Trump announces America is terminating its relationship with WHO over its handling of Corona virus

- **United States** President **Donald Trump** has announced that **America** is terminating its relationship with **World Health Organization** over its handling of the Corona virus. He blamed WHO and China for the deaths and destruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe.
- The US President stated, because they have failed to make the requested and greatly needed reforms, the United States will be terminating its relationship with WHO forthwith and redirecting those funds to other worldwide and deserving, urgent global public health needs.
- Mr.Trump also announced that the US will end special treatment of Hong Kong in response to Chinese imposition of new controls.

IMF approves 732 million emergency assistance to Bangladesh for COVID-19

- The **IMF Executive Board** approved an **emergency financial assistance** worth dollar **732 million** for **Bangladesh** to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The IMF stated that the assistance has been approved for Bangladesh to meet its urgent **Balance of payment** and **fiscal needs** as Corona pandemic has led to sharp decline in its exports and income from remittances.
- The assistance is provided under the **Rapid Credit Facility** and **Rapid Financing Instrument** provisions of the IMF. The money will help Bangladesh to meet its health, social protection and macro-stabilization measures.
- In response to the severe economic slow down due to Corona pandemic, the government of Bangladesh has undertaken food distribution and cash transfer programmes to vulnerable sections as well as ensuring payment of wages in Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector and provision of working capital to business and farmers.
- The IMF stated that mobilization of tax revenue, addressing the issue of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of the banks, infrastructure and governance remain key challenges for Bangladesh to enhance business environment and attract FDI.
- This is the largest amount of loan assistance for Bangladesh to deal with the Covid-19 fallout. Earlier ADB provided **500 million** assistance to Bangladesh to deal with the Corona pandemic.

Revision Points

Country	Capital	Currency	Head
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Bangladesh	Dhaka	Taka	Abdul Hamid
Iraq	Baghdad	Dinar	Mustafa al-Kadhimi
UAE	Abu Dhabi	Dirham	Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
USA	Washington D.C	Dollar	Donald Trump
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	Bidhya Devi Bhandari
Iran	Tehran	Rial	Hassan Rouhani
Israel	Jerusalem	Shekel	Benjamin Netanyahu
Afghanistan	Kabul	Afghani	Ashraf Ghani
Pakistan	Islamabad	Rupee	Arif Alvi
China	Beijing	Renminbi	Xi Jinping
Japan	Tokyo	Yen	Shinzo Abe
Australia	Canberra	Dollar	Scott Morrison
Russia	Moscow	Ruble	Vladimir Putin
Estonia	Tallinn	Euro	Kersti Kaljulaid
Lesotho	Maeru	Loti	Moeketsi Majoro

Important Appointments

National Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor
Shikha Sharma (Former CEO – Axis Bank)	Advisor to Google Pay India	Note: 'Nearby Spot' was launched by Google. It will be launched in Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, Pune & Delhi.
Suresh K Reddy (Additional Secretary in External Ministry)	Ambassador of India to Brazil	
Ajay Tirkey	Secretary in Ministry of Women & Child Development	
Neeraj Dhawan	Chief Risk Officer, YES Bank	Ashish Agarwal
Ramesh Babu V	Director (Operations), NTPC Ltd	
Sriram Venkataraman	Chief Financial Officer, FlipKart	Emily McNeal
Rahul Chhabra	Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs	Economics related Secretary
Tarun Bajaj (Secretary, Ministry of Finance)	Director on RBI	NA
Krishnan Ramachandran	MD & CEO, Max Bupa Health Insurance	Ashish Mehrotra
Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury	Chairperson, Parliament's Public Accounts Committee	

D P S Negi	Director General of Labour Bureau	BN Nandha
Narinder Batra	President, International Hockey Federation	
Anil Bhansali	Vice President of Engineering in India	(Former Microsoft Executive)
Indu Shekhar Chaturvedi	Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy	Anand Kumar
Akhil Kumar (Boxer, Arjuna Award winning Olympian)	Inducted into the National Anti-Doping Agency's Disciplinary Panel	Serving as ACP Gurugram
Manoj Ahuja	Chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education	Anita Karwal
V Vidyavathi	Director General, Archaeological Survey of India	
Zubair Iqbal	Managing Director, J & K Bank	Senior Vice President (SVP) of HDFC Bank
Harsh Vardhan	Chairman, Executive Board of World Health Organization	Dr Hiroki Nakatani of Japan
Rajesh Goel	Director General, National Real Estate Development Council	Major real estate developers – NAREDCO & CREDAI
Dilip Oommen (CEO, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India)	President, Indian Steel Association	Tata Steel CEO T V Narendran
Govinda Rajulu Chintala	Chairman, NABARD	Harsh Kumar Bhanwala
Shaji KV and P V S Suryakumar	Deputy MDs, NABARD	
B R Sharma	Chairman, Public Service Commission for the UT of J&K	Appointed by G C Murmu
TS Tirumurti	India's Permanent Representative to the UN	Syed Akbaruddin
Jahnabi Phookan (Assam based entrepreneur)	37 th President, FICCI Ladies Organization	Harjinder Kaur Talwar
Abhas Jha	key position on climate change and disaster management in South Asia	World Bank
Periasamy Kumaran	India's High Commissioner to Singapore	Jawed Ashraf
Prem K Nair (Consul General of India to	Ambassador of India to the Republic of Niger	

Hambantota)		
Sandip Mukund Pradhan	Director-General, Sports Authority of India	
SN Rajeswari	CMD, Oriental Insurance Company	AV Girija Kumar
Narinder Batra	Member, Olympic Channel Commission	
Mohit Gupta	Co-founder, Zomato (HQ – Gurgaon)	4 th person to become the co-founder
Thierry Delaporte	CEO & MD, Wipro	Abidali Neemuchwala
R. Sreelekha	First Woman DGP of Kerala	Head of the Fire and Rescue Services
Aiman Ezzat	CEO, Capgemini (France based company)	Paul Hermelin
Ravinder Singh Dhillon	Chairman & MD, Power Finance Corporation	Rajeev Sharma
P.R.Jaishankar	MD, India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited	Executive Director at National Housing Bank
S Gopalakrishnan	Additional Secretary, PM's Office	Currently serving at the ministry of electronics
Manoj Pande	15 th Commander – in-Chief, Andaman & Nicobar Command	Podali Shankar Rajeshwar
Arun Singhal	Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India	GSG Ayyangar

International Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor/Others
Atsushi Ogata	President, CEO, MD of Honda Motor Co (Japan based)	V Sridhar - Senior director — purchase, HMSI. Yadvinder Singh Guleria and Vinay Dhingra – Board Directors
Jacqueline d'Arros Hughes	Director-General, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Hyderabad)	
Ashok Michael Pinto	Representative to IBRD (nominated by Trump)	Erik Bethel
Saritha Komatireddy	Nominated to a Federal Court in NewYork	
Mustafa al-Kadhimi	Prime Minister, Iraq	Adil Abdul-Mahdi
Dia Mirza (Tenure	National Goodwill Ambassador	United Nations Environment

extended for 2 years)		Programme
Leela Samson	Jury, JCB Prize for Literature	Aruni Kashyap, Tejaswini Niranjana, Ramu Ramanathan & Deepika Sorabjee – Other members
Benjamin Netanyahu (5 th term)	Prime Minister, Israel	Benny Gantz – Defence Minister of Israel
Keva Bain	President, 73 rd World Health Assembly	Permanent representative of Bahamas
Carmen Reinhart	Vice President & Chief Economist, World Bank	
Tsai Ing-wen	President, Taiwan	
Leo Puri	Chairman, JP Morgan	Kalpana Morparia
Marcos Prado Troyjo	President, New Development Bank	K.V. Kamnath
Anil Kishora	Vice President, New Development Bank	DMD & CRO of State Bank of India

Resignation/Retirement

Name of the Person	Designation
Atanu Chkraborty (Retirement)	Secretary, Dept of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance
Roberto Azevedo	Chief, World Trade Organization
Jack Ma (Alibaba Co-founder)	Retired from SoftBank Group Corp
Thomaas Thabane	Prime Minister of Lesotho (Moeketsi Majoro – expected PM)

LS Speaker nominates Dr Jitendra Singh, others as Delimitation Commission Members

- Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** has nominated the **Associate Members of Delimitation Commission** for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir along with Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur under Article 5 of the **Delimitation Act, 2002**.
- The members nominated in J&K are **MoS PMO, Dr Jitendra Singh** and Members of Parliament, **Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Mohammad Akbar Lone, Hasnain Masoodi and Jugal Kishore Sharma**.
- Jammu and Kashmir at present has no legislative assembly as it is a Union Territory with a provision of a legislature. Members of Parliament and legislative assemblies of states, for which the Delimitation Commission is set up, are drawn in as associate members to assist the panel in its task.
- The commission will delimit the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019.
- According to section 60 of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019, the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be increased from 107 to 114.

Important Awards and Honours

Winner	Prize	Awarded By/Theme/Purpose
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Thangjam Dhabali Singh	Order of the Rising Sun	A better understanding of Japan in India
T Pradeep (Padma Shri Awardee, IIT Madras Professor)	Nikkei Asia Prizes 2020	Nanotechnology-based water purification at ₹ 2
Dar Yasin, Mukhtar Khan, and Channi Anand	2020 Pulitzer Prize	Striking images of life
Shrenik Ghodawat	40 Most Influential Asian Under 40	AsiaOne
Kim Jong-un	World War II medal	Russian President Vladimir Putin
Saurabh Lodha (IIT Bombay Professor)	Young Career Award in Nano Science and Technology for the year 2020	Department of Science and Technology, GoI
Siddharth Varadarajan	Freedom of Speech Award	Commitment to human rights and freedom of expression in the media
Sania Mirza	Fed Cup Heart Award	International Tennis Federation
Akshay Kumar (Commander of the Anti-Submarine Warfare School of the Southern Naval Command in Kochi)	Vice Admiral G.M. Hiranandani Memorial Rolling Trophy for the year 2020	Vice Admiral A.K. Chawla (Anshu Bhau (2) & Kuldeep Tyagi (3)) Instituted in 2013
Abhinav Suri, Kuldeep Yadav & Sangram Krshirsagar	Book Prize	Performance during Combined Phase of the Warfare Specialisation Course conducted at Maritime Warfare Centre
Laila Khan (American – Pakistani) Sravya Annappareddy (Indian American)	Coronavirus heroes (Honoured by Donald Trump)	For donating cookies to doctors, nurses and firefighters
Vinay Badhwar (National Hydrographer)	Alexander Dalrymple Award	Recognition of his outstanding contribution to Indian hydrography
Rajiv Joshi	Inventor of the Year award (Awarded by New York Intellectual Property Law Association)	Work in advancing the electronic industry and improving artificial intelligence capabilities.
Suman Gawani (1 st Indian Peacekeeper to get this award)	United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award	He has served with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan
Quarraisha Abdool Karim	Christophe Merieux Prize	AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa
TCS	2020 American Business	2019 TCS New York City

	Award (Gold Stevie - Mobile Marketing Campaign of the Year and a Silver Stevie - Best User Experience)	Marathon app
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Union Minister Giriraj Singh presents awards to the winners of “Startup India-Animal Husbandry Grand Challenge”

- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, **Shri Giriraj Singh**, was the chief guest at the Awards Ceremony for the winners of “**Startup India-Animal Husbandry Grand Challenge**”. MoS (Fisheries & AHD) Shri Sanjeev Kumar Balyan and Secretary (AHD) Shri Atul Chaturvedi were present on the occasion.
- The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, in partnership with Startup India, had launched the ‘**Animal Husbandry Startup Grand Challenge**’, to scout for innovative and commercially viable solutions to address the problems faced by the Animal Husbandry and Dairy sector.
- The challenge was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 11th September last year at a national animal disease control programme in Mathura.
- The challenge was open for application to all startups with unique solutions for six problem statements that were identified as below:
- Value added products: introduce value added dairy products viz. cheese, smoothies, flavoured milk, custard, yoghurt, and other ethnic Indian products using innovative techniques for smaller domestic as well as export markets.
- Single use plastic alternatives: using environment-friendly alternatives to replace single-use polythene in dairy sector.
- Eliminate milk adulteration: tackling milk adulteration in the dairy sector
- Breed improvement and animal nutrition: use of innovative technologies for quick genetic gain among Indian breeds of cattle and buffalos, and new varieties of green fodder and enriched animal feed.
- E-commerce solutions: encouraging innovations to provide modern digital infrastructure and advisory services across the country
- Product traceability: using technologies to track the journey of dairy products from farm to fork
- Value added products: 1. (Winner) Krushak Mitra Agro Services Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai & 2. (Runner Up) Studio Carbon, Ahmedabad
- Eliminate milk adulteration: 1. White Gold Technologies LLP, Mumbai & 2. Micro Life Innovations, Chennai
- Breed improvement: 1. Adis Technologies, Belagavi, Karnataka & 2. CisGEN Biotech Discoveries Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Animal nutrition: 1. Krimanshi Technologies Pvt. Ltd, Jodhpur & 2. Cornext Agri Products Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad
- E-commerce solutions: 1. MooFarm, Gurugram, Haryana & 2. AKM Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Cuttack
- Product traceability: 1. EmerTech Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai & 2. NebulARC Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- Single use plastic alternatives: None found suitable.
- The 12 Startups mentioned above (2 per problem statement) will be given cash grants worth Rs. 1,02,00,000. Two winners under each problem awarded with cash grants worth
- INR10Lakh(Winner)
INR7 Lakh (Runner-up)

GI tag for Jharkhand's Sohrai Khovar painting, Telangana's Telia Rumal

- **Jharkhand's Sohrai Khovar painting** and **Telangana's Telia Rumal** were given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the **Geographical Indications Registry** headquartered in **Chennai**.

- The application for the painting was made by Sohrai Kala Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti Limited while the application for Telia Rumal was made by the Consortium of Puttapaka Handloom Cluster-IHDS.
- The Sohrai Khovar painting is a traditional and ritualistic mural art being practised by local tribal women during local harvest and marriage seasons using local, naturally available soils of different colours in the area of **Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand**.
- Telia Rumal cloth involves intricate handmade work with cotton loom displaying a variety of designs and motifs in three particular colours — **red, black and white**.

NRAI nominates Anjum Moudgil for Khel Ratna, Jaspal for Dronachary Award

- The **National Rifle Association of India (NRAI)** has nominated rifle ace Anjum Moudgil for the Khel Ratna -- the country's highest sporting honour -- while recommending Jaspal Rana for the Dronacharya Award for the second year in a row.
- The NRAI has sent the names of champion pistol shooters Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma for the prestigious Arjuna Award, according to federation sources.
- The 26-year-old Moudgil, who started shooting in 2008, is among the first two Indians to have secured quota places in the sport for the Tokyo Olympics.
- The shooter from Chandigarh earned the quota in the 10m Air Rifle event when she won the silver medal in the ISSF World Cup in Korea in 2008.
- The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award carries a medallion, a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 7.5 lakh.
- Dronacharya awards are given to honour eminent coaches who have successfully trained sportspersons or teams and enabled them to achieve outstanding results in international competitions.

Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities: India's 3-star and 5-star cities Announced

- **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MOHUA)** has announced the results of the Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities.
- **Hardeep Singh Puri**, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, has informed that for the assessment year 2019-2020, a total of six cities have been certified as **5-Star (Ambikapur, Rajkot, Surat, Mysuru, Indore and Navi Mumbai)**, **65 cities as 3-Star** and **70 cities as 1-Star**.
- Puri also launched the revised protocol for the Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities at the event.
- The Star Rating Protocol was launched by the Ministry in January 2018 to institutionalize a mechanism for cities to achieve Garbage Free status, and to motivate cities to achieve higher degrees of cleanliness.

ULB Name	Final Rating	State
Ambikapur	5 Star	Chhattisgarh
Rajkot	5 Star	Gujarat
Surat	5 Star	Gujarat
Mysore	5 Star	Karnataka
Indore	5 Star	Madhya Pradesh
Navi Mumbai	5 Star	Maharashtra

Important MOU's

IIT Hyderabad Partners With Hong Kong Financial Capital Firm To Create Venture Ecosystem

- The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad** has planned to collaborate with a **Hong Kong**-based financial firm **New Frontier Capital Management**, to establish a global network for ventures as well as to create a venture ecosystem.
- The objective of the collaboration is to promote innovation, research and incubation. The firm has offices in Tokyo and Singapore as well.
- An MoU was signed by **Prof B.S. Murty**, Director, **IIT Hyderabad** and **Shigeki Usuki**, Chief Executive Officer, **New Frontier Capital Management**, which will also enable New Frontier Capital Management to establish an office at the IIT Hyderabad campus.
- IIT Hyderabad encourages the entrepreneurship ecosystem with its unique BTech minor in entrepreneurship and its tech incubators like **i-TIC** and **CfHE**.
- The MoU also mentions the establishment of "**Joint Innovation Centres**" in Tokyo, Japan, as well as in Telangana and will help create an ecosystem that is connected to global research institutions.

Facebook and Bollywood collaborate on 'I FOR INDIA' concert

- Social media networking site **Facebook** has collaborated with some of the **biggest names in Indian entertainment** to put together a home-to-home fundraiser concert, '**I For India**'.
- **GiveIndia (www.giveindia.org)** is India's largest giving platform with reach across 23 states. It is associated with over 100 NGOs, working on-ground to support the required interventions with the prevention, healthcare infrastructure, livelihood support, and essentials for people in need.
- The four-hour-long concert will be live globally on Facebook on Sunday, 3rd May 2020 at 7:30 pm IST and will feature performances and personal messages from 85+ Indian and global stars including A R Rahman, Aamir Khan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Akshay Kumar, Alia Bhatt, Javed Akhtar, Anushka Sharma, Katrina Kaif, Nick Jonas, Priyanka Chopra, Lilly Singh, Virat Kohli, Ustad Zakhir Hussain, among others.

CCMB ties up with Bengaluru-based company to research on COVID-19

- **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)**, Hyderabad has tied up with a **Bengaluru-based company, Eyestem Research Private Limited**, to take up research activities on **COVID-19**. Through this research collaboration, an attempt will be made to grow novel coronavirus in human cell lines, which will enable in vitro testing of potential drugs and vaccines against the COVID-19.
- Scientists of CCMB stated, the research team will use Eyestem's human lung epithelial cell culture system provided as part of its Anti-COVID Screening (ACS) platform to understand the molecular and pathological characteristics of the novel coronavirus, with a view of establishing a rational basis for testing potential drugs in vitro. Dr. Rakesh Mishra, Director of CCMB stated, culturing the virus outside the human host is a technological challenge that needs to be overcome.
- CCMB is a constituent laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR known for its cutting-edge research work on cellular and molecular biology. Eyestem Research Private Limited is a cell therapy start-up incubated at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms, C-CAMP, Bengaluru. C-CAMP is an initiative of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.

CSIR's IGIB, Tata Sons sign agreement for licensing of KNOW-HOW for rapid, accurate diagnosis of COVID-19

- The **Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**, constituent lab **Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB)** and **Tata Sons** have signed an agreement for licensing of **KNOW-HOW** for rapid and accurate diagnosis of COVID-19.

- The license shall include transfer of the knowledge for scaling up the KNOW-HOW in the form of a kit that can be deployed for COVID-19 testing on ground as early as end of this month.
- A completely indigenous scientific invention, FNCAS9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay, FELUDA for COVID-19 has been designed for mitigating the ongoing COVID-19 situation and cater to mass testing.
- Its main advantages are its affordability, relative ease of use and non-dependency on expensive Q-PCR machines. CSIR IGIB and TATA Sons will now work together to bring it for widespread use at the earliest. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is a premier organisation under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- This innovative CRISPR 'Feluda' test uses cutting edge CRISPR technology for detection of genomic sequence of novel coronavirus. It uses a test protocol that is simple to administer and easy to interpret enabling results to be made available to the medical fraternity in relatively lesser time, as compared to other test protocols. He stated, they believe that CRISPR is futuristic technology that can also be configured for detection of multiple other pathogens in the future.

PNB Housing Finance signs MoU with IIT Delhi

- To support R&D for reusable PPE to be supplied to government hospitals **.PNB Housing Finance** has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **IIT Delhi** (Indian Institute of Technology).
- The initiative will support critical research and development (R&D) of a unique prototype material to be used in manufacturing sustainable (washable and reusable) PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) surgical gowns and masks. These will then be supplied to notable government hospitals.
- Through this MoU, the company will support the Department of Textile and Fibre Engineering, IIT Delhi in fast tracked R&D of high quality PPE material. The cloth technology developed under this initiative will help in producing affordable, sustainable and reusable PPEs. The prototype will be tested at government accredited labs.

TRIFED & Art of Living Foundation collaboration to provide Free Ration Kits to Needy Tribes India Artisans

- **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India**, TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs and **Art Of Living**, AOL Foundation have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate in programmes of each organisation for **promoting Tribal Enterprises**.
- The Art of Living Foundation has agreed to provide **Free Ration Kits to Needy Tribes India Artisans**.
- TRIFED Regional Offices have compiled the list of needy tribal artisans and have identified 9,409 needy tribal artisans located across the country for distribution of ration kits under I Stand With Humanity campaign of AOL. This is being coordinated with the AOL offices in all States.

TVS Group, Sundaram Med, IIT-M develop low-cost, automated respiratory assists

- **The TVS group, Sundaram Medical Foundation** and **IIT-Madras** have jointly developed a low-cost, automated respiratory assist device called **The Sundaram Ventago**. This was done in **collaboration with** hospitals like **Kauvery Hospital** and the **Madras Medical College** and with guidance from global educational institutions like **MIT-Boston**.
- It provides respiratory support to patients via the controlled and automated squeezing of a self-inflating or AMBU bag and includes functionalities to control respiratory rate (breaths per minute), tidal volume, pressure parameters and I:E ratios.
- It has been functionally validated to international standards and an extensive risk analysis has been performed with the Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre of IIT Madras.

- The device is versatile and mobile. It constantly monitors and reports respiratory parameters that are important to clinicians and is very easy to use. It also provides the needed patient safety features such as audible alarms for line disconnection or in case that the PIP exceeds a certain threshold.
- The Sundaram Ventago is a '**Make in India**' product with a local supply chain based on proven global technology. It can be produced quickly in larger numbers. The Sundaram Ventago will also have a great impact post the Covid crisis as this device can make respiratory support more affordable and available to all.
- It provides physicians a simple and cost-effective option when incoming patients with respiratory difficulty surpasses ventilator capacity and is especially useful in remote and rural areas where ventilator facilities are not available.

NRAI partners with DotPe to build tech platform for online payments

- **National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI)**, the apex body of the F&B industry, has partnered with fintech start-up **DotPe** to build its own tech platform that would enable them with online payments for **digital ordering, bill settlements, and contactless dining**.
- NRAI had announced that it will launch "a new platform that online food ordering and delivery services along with loyalty programs. This would be in direct take on with existing food-tech aggregators, Zomato and Swiggy. The association's new move is aimed at reducing the dependence of restaurants on such apps.
- The likes of Dineout, Zomato, and Paytm are already pushing their platform with contactless dining. Zomato has, in fact, taken it a notch above and made its contactless dining free for all restaurants across India and other global destinations for a period of at least six months.
- By collaborating with Dotpe, the restaurants will now be able to stay transparent with the customers by communicating with them directly through WhatsApp for all the online orders. Meanwhile, there's no need for customers to download any additional app as they can start ordering food by simply scanning a QR code once.

Flipkart joins Vishal Mega Mart to deliver essentials at home in 26 cities

- Homegrown retailer **Flipkart** announced a partnership with retail store chain **Vishal Mega Mart** for the home delivery of essential items through a safe supply chain in 26 cities.
- A Vishal Mega Mart Essentials store has been created on the Flipkart platform.
- Consumers can order essential products like atta, rice, oil, pulses, beverages, soap, toothpaste, and other essential items from more than 365 Vishal Mega Mart stores and get them delivered at their doorstep by Flipkart as per the government guidelines across all zones (except containment zones).
- Once a consumer places an order through the Flipkart app, the delivery executives will collect the products from the nearest Vishal store and deliver it at the customer's doorstep.
- The 26 cities are: Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, NCR -Delhi, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad, Noida, Faridabad, Patna, Goa, Guwahati, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Jaipur, Bareilly, Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Aligarh, Dehradun, Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Raipur, Bilaspur and Bhubaneswar.
- It will be further scaled to over 240 cities in the next four weeks.

ONGC, NTPC sign MOU to set up joint venture for renewable energy business

- India's top oil and gas producer **ONGC** and country's biggest electricity generator **NTPC** have signed a preliminary agreement to set up a joint venture company for **renewable energy projects**.
- The MoU will enable both companies to achieve their respective targets in renewable energy business.

- NTPC and ONGC will explore and set up renewable power assets including offshore wind, in India and overseas, and explore opportunities in the fields of sustainability, storage, e-mobility and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) compliant projects.
- **ONGC's Energy Strategy 2040** document calls for the company to invest in renewable energy sources with a target to create **5-10 gigawatts** portfolio with a focus on offshore wind power.
- ONGC has a renewable portfolio of 176 MW comprising of 153 MW wind power and 23 MW of solar plants.
- NTPC, with a 920 MW of installed renewable power capacity in its portfolio with about 2,300 MW of renewable energy projects under construction and aspiring to reach **32 GW by 2032**, will benefit from this tie up by expanding its footprint in offshore wind and overseas renewable energy projects as well.

REC Ltd ties up with TajSATS to provide meals to frontline healthcare workers

- REC Foundation, the CSR arm of **REC Limited**, has partnered with **TajSATS** (a joint venture of IHCL and SATS Ltd) to distribute **specialty-made nutritious meal packets for medical staff** in Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi.
- Power sector financier REC Limited is spearheading the mission to feed the medical staff in key government hospitals as well as poor daily wage labourers across the nation, through collaborative efforts.
- Every day, 300 food packets are being delivered as a gesture of gratitude to the frontline healthcare warriors of New Delhi. Over 18,000 meals will be delivered in New Delhi through this initiative.
- At the same time, REC in collaboration with various district authorities, NGOs and electricity distribution companies (DISCOMS) is already providing cooked meals and ration to the needy across the nation.
- This initiative was started when the country went under a nation-wide lockdown and will continue till the norms last.
- The corporation has distributed more than 4.58 lacs kilograms of food grains, 1.26 lac meal packets, 9600 litres of sanitizers, 3,400 PPE kits and 83,000 masks.

Maruti Suzuki partners ICICI Bank to offer retail financing schemes to customers

- The country's largest carmaker **Maruti Suzuki India (MSI)** has joined hands with **ICICI Bank** to offer retail financing schemes to its customers.
- ICICI Bank is offering **flexi EMI scheme** which enables customers to pay low EMI initially, in order to help them overcome the liquidity stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The EMI amount starts from **Rs 899 on a loan of Rs 1 lakh** for first three months. The bank is also offering similar other EMI plans for MSI customers.
- With Maruti Suzuki's over 3,000 outlets and ICICI Bank's extensive network of over 5,380 branches across India, the offer will definitely benefit the customers of all profiles who are willing to buy a car.

Airtel Payments Bank (APBL) ties up with Mastercard to develop products for farmers, SMEs

- **Airtel Payments Bank (APBL)** has partnered with **Mastercard** to develop **customized products** catering to customers across the underbanked spectrum **including farmers, small and medium enterprises, and retail customers**.
- Both entities have been working towards driving the adoption of formal banking and digital payments in the country.
- The collaboration will bring together Mastercard's global and local experience in developing advanced financial solutions and Airtel Payments Bank's strong distribution network to reach the last mile and its large customer base.
- The collaboration aims at building a digital platform which provides farmers with knowledge about advanced farming techniques and connection to marketplaces, while simultaneously enabling them to receive payments directly in their Airtel Payments Bank account.

- Finally, Airtel Payments Bank and Mastercard will work together to create **differentiated card solutions**, including solutions for **contactless payments via NFC (Near Field Communication)** for customers and merchants.
- Airtel Payments Bank has been working with Mastercard for the last three years to offer Mastercard powered debit cards to its savings bank account customers in the country.

Flipkart signs MoU with Karnataka Mango Board to enable farmers sell produce online

- India's leading ecommerce marketplace **Flipkart** has entered into a **memorandum of understanding (MoU)** with **Karnataka State Mango Department and Marketing Corporation**, to enable mango farmers to sell their produce online.
- According to Flipkart, this partnership will provide farmers with the much-needed market access to consumers, creating a potential revenue stream during these testing times of coronavirus.
- As part of the MoU, Flipkart will provide its **marketplace platform** to the Mango Board farmer producer organisations/sellers, growers and traders by enrolling them on the platform.
- Flipkart will also provide training and capacity building of how to use the app and other user interfaces. Along with the Mango Board, Indian Post Offices will function as the last-mile delivery operations partners during this season.
- Over the last few months, Flipkart has partnered with various FMCG and retail companies to bring a wider range of essentials on its platform. With this partnership, the company forays into the farmer producer organisation's community further contributing to supporting the livelihoods of mango growers and the farmer community.

Tamil Nadu inks 17 MoUs with firms totalling investments of Rs.15,128 crore

- Tamil Nadu signed **17 MoUs** with various companies involving investments totalling **Rs.15,128 crore**.
- Nine of the MoUs were signed in the presence of Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and the rest through video conference. This is likely to generate over 47,150 jobs.
- The MoUs were signed by Usha Kakarla, Managing Director and CEO, Guidance, and Aneesh Sekhar, Executive Director, Guidance with various company officials.
- **Daimler India Commercial Vehicles** will invest Rs.2,277 crore (expected to generate employment of 400) while **Salcomp**, the Finland-based mobile phone charger manufacturer, is investing Rs.1,300 crore in Chennai (expected to create employment for 10,000)
- **Ashton Shoes** Private Ltd has entered into a joint venture with the Taiwanese company Chung Jye Shoes to manufacture footwear at an investment of Rs.300 crore (to create employment for 25,000).
- The **Singapore-based ST Tele Media** is investing Rs.1,500 crore in a data centre in Siruseri while HDCl Data Centre Holdings is investing Rs.2,800 crore in a data centre. The Japanese company **Polymatech Electronics** will invest Rs.900 crore in a semiconductor chip manufacturing facility, which will provide employment for 600.
- French renewable energy company **ENGIE Group**, through Vivid Solaire Pvt Ltd, will develop a wind farm in Tuticorin with an investment worth Rs.2,000 crore (expected to create employment for 600).
- Tamil Nadu has also constituted a special task force to woo investments from China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and USA.
- The State government also is developing a special package for investors relocating India due to realignment of supply chains.

PFC signs MoU with NBPCL to fund 225 MW hydro-electric projects, Multipurpose projects in MP

- **Power Finance Corporation (PFC)**, the central PSU under the Ministry of Power and India's leading NBFC, signed an agreement with **Narmada Basin Projects Company Ltd. (NBPCL)**, a wholly-owned company of **Government of Madhya Pradesh**.
- The move aims to fund projects worth Rs.22,000 crore for **225 MW** hydro-electric projects & multipurpose projects in the State of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Highlights:**
- As per the agreement, the funds will be deployed by NBPCL for setting up hydroelectric projects of **225 MW** and power components of 12 major multipurpose projects in Madhya Pradesh.
- The Government of Madhya Pradesh has conducted the pre-feasibility study of these projects and has provided approval for their execution.
- The disbursement of the amount will be linked to the execution of the projects.
- Under the MoU, PFC will actively partner with NBPCL and provide finance for hydro-electric plants totaling 225 MW along with power components of multipurpose projects as part of the state government's endeavor to implement twelve major multipurpose projects.
- The major multipurpose projects that will be financed under the MoU are Chinki Boras Multipurpose Project Narsinghpur, Raisen Hoshangabad, Basaniya Multipurpose Project Dindori, Sakkar Pench Link Narsinghpur, Chhindwara, Dudhi Project Chhindwara, Hoshangabad, etc.

Vakrangee ties up with LIC for micro insurance products

- **Vakrangee Ltd** has tied up with **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** to distribute micro insurance products in unserved and underserved areas through its centres across the country.
- Further, renewal premium collection for all micro insurance policies of LIC will be enabled at Vakrangee kendras irrespective of whether these policies have been procured at the kendra or not.
- Vakrangee currently has more than 23,000 kendras (10,000 operational and 13,000 under on-boarding process) spread across 30 states and union territories, 500 districts and 6,150 postal codes.

CSIR-IIIM & Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) to develop RT-LAMP based test for Coronavirus

- **CSIR-IIIM**, Jammu, a constituent laboratory of CSIR, has partnered with **Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)** to develop and scale-up a new **Reverse Transcriptase-Loop Mediated Isothermal Amplification (RT-LAMP)** based COVID-19 diagnostic kit for which a formal MOU has also been signed between CSIR-IIIM, Jammu and RIL.
- COVID-19 RT-LAMP test is a nucleic acid based test carried out from nasal/throat swab sample from patients. The test recipe has been developed and successfully demonstrated using synthetic templates. It is rapid (45-60 min), cost effective and accurate test. It has been tested with a small number of patients' samples and validating the kit on more number of patient samples is planned and will be done together with RIL.
- The advantage of this test is that the RT-LAMP based COVID-19 kit components are easily available and these can be completely manufactured in India. While the current COVID-19 testing is done by real-time PCR, their components are mostly imported. Further, these tests are expensive; require highly trained manpower, costly instruments and a relatively high-end lab and cannot be deployed at remote locations in quarantine centers, airports and railway stations, etc.
- On the other hand, the RT-LAMP test can be done in a single tube with minimal expertise in a very basic lab setup like mobile units / kiosks for testing at Airports, Railway Stations, Bus Stands and other public places. The end

detection of the test is a simple colored reaction, which is easily visible in UV light, and now is being modified such that it can be detected in regular light.

- **CSIR-IIIM and RIL** will jointly approach **ICMR** for approval. RIL plans to rapidly scale up the tests for the larger population and use it for easy, rapid and widespread diagnosis for COVID-19 detection for the larger interest of society.

UP govt to sign MoUs with industry associations to create 10 lakh jobs for migrant workers

- In a major breakthrough in the ongoing process of Employment generation for migrant workers in **Uttar Pradesh**, stage is now set for employment of 10 lakh workers.
- Many industries associations will sign **MoUs** with state government in this regard which will give a boost to the **MSME sector** in state.
- In the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, MSME department of state will sign MOUs with Industries and Business Chambers for providing 9.5 lakhs skilled and semi skilled manpower.
- Under this agreement **Indian Industries Association** has asked for 5 lakh workers while National real estate Development Council asked for 2.5 lakh and CII has asked for 2 lakh workers.
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has started the mission for migrant workers with the motto of **Har Hath Ho kam, Har Ghar Mein Rojgar** means **work to every hand and Employment to every house**.
- A special software is being prepared for the generation of employment according to the skill of migrant workers and the need of industrial units.

Infosys partners up with Avaloq for digital wealth management services

- **Infosys** announced a strategic partnership with Zurich-based software company **Avaloq** to provide end-to-end (e2e) wealth management capabilities through digital platforms.
- The partnership is meant to offer e2e products and services as Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), private cloud or public cloud across the globe to its clients.
- Infosys will work closely with Avaloq to expand its market beyond Switzerland with an initial focus on EMEA and APAC regions.

Revision Points

Organizations	Purpose
IIT – Hyderabad & New Frontier Capital Management	Venture Ecosystem
Facebook & Bollywood	I For India Concert
CCMB & Eyestem Research Pvt Ltd	Research on COVID -19
CSIR & Tata Sons	Licensing of KNOW-HOW diagnosis
PNB Housing Finance & IIT Delhi	R&D for reusable PPE to be supplied to government hospitals
TRIFED & Art of Living Foundation	Providing Free Rations Kits
TVS group, Sundaram Medical Foundation and IIT-Madras	Sundaram Ventago
National Restaurants Association of India & DotPe	Tech platform for online payments
FlipKart & Vishal Mart	Delivering essentials at home in 26 cities

ONGC & NTPC	Renewable energy projects
REC Foundation & TajSATS	Providing meals to frontline healthcare workers
Maruti Suzuki & ICICI Bank	Retail financing schemes
Airtel Payments Bank & Mastercard	Developing products for farmers, SMEs
Flipkart & Karnataka Mango Board	Enabling farmers to sell their produce online
PFC & NBPL	225 MW hydro-electric projects
Vakrangee Ltd & LIC	Micro Insurance products
Infosys & Avaloq	Digital wealth management services
CSIR-IIIM & RIL	Developing RT-LAMP based test for COVID -19

Important Summit & Conference

Ministry of Tourism hosts 13th webinar titled 'Destination - Sariska Tiger reserve' of "Dekho Apna Desh" series

- The 13th session of Ministry of Tourism's Dekho ApnaDesh webinar titled, 'Destination- Sariska Tiger reserve' was a presentation and virtual tour of wildlife adventure, safari experience for the traveller within the **Sariska Tiger Reserve'** in Alwar district, **Rajasthan**.
- The first webinar "City of cities- Delhi's Personal Diary" was launched on April 14. It was on the history of Delhi that unfolded the long heritage of the city.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh Addresses Bamboo Conclave via Video-conference

- **Union Minister for the Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER), Jitendra Singh**, addressed a **Bamboo Conclave** through **video conference** to discuss how country's bamboo reserve can help strengthen its economy.
- The minister informed that Northeast has **60 percent of India's bamboo reserves**.
- In the post-COVID-19 era, it is an opportunity for the Northeastern region to help India become world competitive and self-sufficient in this sector.
- For this, DoNER will work out a time bound plan for promotion of bamboo manufacturing and trade, and also work out feasibility of Public Private Partnership (PPP).
- Bamboo can be processed into multiple products such as bio-diesel and green fuel, wooden lumbers and plywood, which can change the entire face of the economy and create employment opportunities in multiple sectors.

Digital Conference on RE-START Reboot the Economy through Science, Technology And Research Translations

- The **Technology Development Board (TDB)** a statutory body of the **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** along with the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** will organise a high-level digital conference on 'Rebooting the Economy through Science, Technology and Research Translations (RESTART)' on May 11, 2020, to celebrate the **National Technology Day**.
- Union Minister for Science & Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Sciences, **Dr. Harsh Vardhan would be the Chief Guest for the occasion**.
- The conference will bring together Scientists, Technocrats, Government officials, Diplomats, WHO officials and dignitaries from national and international Industry, Research Institutions and Academic Institutions on a single platform to share their insights on the role played by S & T in the global healthcare crisis and find solutions that not only address the current pandemic but will also help us in facing the challenges ahead.

- The conference will have technical sessions on 'Medicines & Medical Technologies'; 'Advanced Materials – New Technology Horizons'; 'Advanced Manufacturing Technologies for Sustainable Future and Global Innovation' & Technology Alliance for Global Economic Leadership.

India to participate in SCO foreign ministers' virtual meet on coronavirus

- India will be participating in the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** Foreign Ministers' meeting on Covid-19. The video conference is being hosted by **Russia**. The initial remarks will be delivered by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.
- External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** will be attending the conference to discuss the global challenges, preparedness, and response to the coronavirus pandemic.
- The ministers will discuss topical regional and global issues and particularly focus on developing cooperation within the SCO in the context of the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19), the upcoming 75th anniversary of the Victory in WWII and the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Russian foreign ministry stated.
- Other issues on the agenda include the preparations for the SCO summit in St Petersburg and other events as part of Russia's SCO Presidency, it added.
- The grouping will share information on best practices and areas of cooperation to work on, particularly in the medicine, medical equipment, and pharmaceutical sector, given the fact that three of the world's biggest pharma manufacturers -- India, China, Russia -- are part of SCP.
- The SCO, as an organisation, covers three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and nearly half of the human population. With three major economies as part of the grouping, the meeting will focus on how to contain the spread of the coronavirus.
- Pakistan is expected to be represented by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The SCO forum will invite international organisations as well to participate and discuss the health and economic crises as also how to overcome the challenges.

Dr Harsh Vardhan participates in 32nd Commonwealth Health Ministers' meeting through video conference

- Health Minister **Dr Harsh Vardhan** participated in the **32nd Commonwealth Health Ministers'** Meeting through Video conference. He highlighted the timely, graded and pro-active measures taken by India towards COVID-19 management.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan stated, India has been the first country to urge consolidated global action to fight the challenge of COVID-19. India took all necessary and timely steps including surveillance at points of entry, evacuation of our nationals abroad, surveillance in community through disease surveillance network and community involvement as part of its management efforts.
- He stated, government has announced an economic package of more than 265 billion US Dollars to support economic recovery as well to support vulnerable segments of population.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan stated, India has provided essential medicines such as Hydroxychloroquine to almost 100 needy countries, extending solidarity and support during this time of crisis. He stated, it is important to work on the causes of the pandemic and discover drugs and vaccine to control transmission and prevent recurrence.

Piyush Goyal participates in virtual session of G20 trade ministers

- Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal attended a video conference meeting of commerce ministers of **G-20 countries**.

- The trade and investment ministers of the G20 countries participated in the extraordinary video conference. The meeting was called to discuss ways to minimise disruption to trade and global supply chains which have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On March 30, G20 trade ministers convened for the first video conference dedicated to COVID-19. They pledged efforts to maintain supply chains unimpeded during the pandemic.
- Trade ministers from the G20 major economies had agreed to take immediate measures for facilitating trade in essential goods, besides incentivising additional production of equipment and drugs to battle the coronavirus crisis.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan To Represent India At WHO's 73rd World Health Assembly

- **World Health Assembly**, organised by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** is set to commence on, May 18 and Union Health Minister **Harsh Vardhan** will be representing India at the two-day meet.
- In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO has announced that the **73rd World Health Assembly** will be held **virtually**. The meeting will be centred on the impact of **Coronavirus** and will witness the participation of all 194 WHO member states and observers. The agenda of the meeting has been limited to two days and will conclude on May 19.
- The WHA is the World Health Organization (WHO)'s plenary body whose member states approve the organization's budget, fill vacancies in its executive board, and vote on agenda items, as per reports.
- The two-day meeting will address a resolution, proposed by the EU to jointly develop affordable diagnostics, medicines, and vaccines for Covid-19.

Ministry of Culture's Development of Museums and Cultural Spaces hosts a webinar on 'Revitalising Museums and Cultural Spaces' on the International Museum Day

- Development of Museums and Cultural Spaces, Ministry of Culture, Government of India hosted a webinar on **"Revitalising Museums and Cultural Spaces"** to celebrate the International Museum Day(18th May).
- The webinar featured some of the best experts in the museum and cultural spaces domain such as Founder Trustee of Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Bengaluru Shri Abhishek Poddar, President of Kochi Biennale Foundation Shri Bose Krishnamachari, Founder and CEO of Cuseum Shri Brendan Ciecko, Managing Director of Teamwork Arts Shi Sanjoy K Roy and CEO of Museums and Cultural Spaces, Ministry of Culture, GoI (Moderator) Shri Raghvendra Singh.
- The Covid-19 pandemic will have significant economic and social repercussions for the cultural and creative industries. Organised for leading Indian and global cultural institutions, creative businesses, startups, policy makers and media, experts in the webinar discussed the way forward for the culture and creative industry.
- One of the most important points of discussion was reimagining cultural spaces and was to introduce innovative ideas to maximise the social and economic value of cultural heritage and to build capacity in order to engage with local audiences and tourists.
- The National e-Governance Division (NeGD) created by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has supported DMCS, Ministry of Culture by providing technical assistance for conducting of this Webinar.

Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan participates in NAM Health Ministers' meeting

- Health Minister **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** participated in the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** Health Ministers' meeting through video conferencing.
- The meeting was chaired by Health Minister of Republic of Azerbaijan Ogtay Shiraliyev.

- The Health Ministers of participating NAM countries expressed their concern at the global threat posed by COVID-19 and resolved to fight it with proper preparedness and greater national, regional and international collaboration.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan while addressing the meeting asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has displayed the interconnectivity and interdependency of countries like never before.
- He added that it has made the world realize that the man-made challenges can only be faced together with collaboration.

'Hunar Haat' to make a comeback in September 2020 after a gap of over -months due to COVID-19

- **'Hunar Haat'**, the flagship initiative by the **Minority Affairs Ministry**, will make a comeback in **September 2020 with a 'Local to Global' theme**.
- The skill fare will resume to operate after an over five-month gap due to the coronavirus pandemic. The last Hunar Haat was held in end of February to March 8 in Ranchi. It is organised in various different cities of the country.
- 'Hunar Haat' is a platform to provide market, employment and employment opportunities to artisans, craftspeople, culinary experts from remote areas of the country to showcase their rare exquisite indigenous handmade products
- So far more than five lakh Indian have been benefited in the last five years.
- The Hunar Haat in Sept 2020 will also have a special 'jaan bhi, jahaan bhi' pavilion to create health awareness among the people with the theme of "Say no to panic, yes to precautions".
- Also, this time, people will be able to buy 'Hunar Haat' products online too.

Revision Points

Conference/Summits	Chaired By/Theme/Others
13 th Dekho ApnaDesh webinar titled 'Destination- Sariska Tiger reserve'	1 st webinar "City of cities- Delhi's Personal Diary" was launched on April 14
Bamboo Conclave	Addressed by Jitendra Singh
Rebooting the Economy through Science, Technology and Research Translations (RESTART)	Organized by TDB, CII
SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting on Covid-19	Hosted by Russia
32nd Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting	Addressed by Harsh Vardhan
Virtual session of G20 trade ministers	Addressed by Piyush Goyal
Revitalising Museums and Cultural Spaces	Organized by Development of Museums and Cultural Spaces
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Health Ministers' meeting	Participated by Harsh Vardhan
Hunar Haat	Local to Global
Digital Summit on Exports (Participated by Piyush Goyal)	Organized by Confederation of Indian Industry, Institutional Partner – EXIM Bank

Important Defence News

Indian Navy launches Operation Samudra Setu to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas

- **Indian Navy** has launched **Operation Samudra Setu** - meaning **Sea Bridge**, as a part of national effort to **repatriate Indian citizens from overseas**. Indian Naval Ships **Jalashwa** and **Magar** are presently enroute to Malé in Maldives to commence evacuation operations from as part of Phase-1.
- Indian Mission in Maldives is preparing a list of Indian nationals to be evacuated by Naval ships and will facilitate their embarkation after requisite medical screening.
- A total of one thousand persons are planned to be evacuated during the first trip, catering for COVID- related social distancing norms vis-a-vis the carrying capacity and medical facilities available onboard. The ships have been suitably provisioned for the evacuation operation.
- The evacuated personnel would be provided the basic amenities and medical facilities during the sea-passage. In view of the unique challenges associated with COVID-19 stringent protocols have also been stipulated.

Ministry of Defence inks Rs 1,200 cr contract to boost electronics sector

- The **ministry of defence** signed a **Rs 1,200-crore** contract with **Tata Power** (strategic engineering division), or **TPSED**, for modernising 37 air bases belonging to the Indian Air Force (IAF), navy, coast guard and two for the home ministry.
- The deal, Modernisation of Air Field Infrastructure Phase 2 (MAFI-2), follows from an earlier contract, called **MAFI-1**, which TPSED won in 2011 to upgrade 30 IAF airfields. That contract has been successfully discharged.
- The Rs 2,500 crore MAFI-1 project was globally tendered, but won by TPSED in the face of stiff competition from the world's most advanced electronics vendors.
- The (MAFI) project is a turnkey project that includes installation and commissioning of modern airfield equipment like Cat-II Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Cat II Air Field Lightning System (AFLS), among others. The modern equipment around the airfield will also be directly connected to the air traffic control (ATC), thereby providing excellent control of the airfield systems to the air traffic controllers, stated the MoD.
- This upgrade of navigational aids and infrastructure allows air operations by military and civil aircraft even in poor visibility and adverse weather conditions, while also enhancing flight safety.
- The 30 air bases already modernised under MAFI-1, include eight along the Sino-Indian border. Their upgraded infrastructure now allows aircraft to take off and land in visibility as low as 300 metres.

China launches 2 satellites to test space-based communications technology

- **China** successfully launched **two satellites** to test the space-based **Internet of Things (IoT) communications technology**.
- The satellites, **Xingyun-2 01 and 02**, were launched by a **Kuaizhou-1A (KZ-1A) carrier rocket** from the **Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre** in northwest China.
- The Rocket is developed by an affiliated company of Sanjiang Group under the **China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC)** used to launch low-orbit small satellites.
- They have successfully entered their planned orbit.

Rajnath Singh adds patrol vessel, 2 interceptor boats to Coast Guard strength

- **Defence minister Rajnath Singh** commissioned an **offshore patrol vessel** and **two interceptor boats** of the Indian Coast Guard, which will add muscle to operations of the maritime security agency.

- Indigenously-built ship **Sachet**, the first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs), and interceptor boats **C-450 and C-451** were commissioned in Goa by Rajnath Singh through video conferencing from New Delhi.
- **Sachet** has been designed and built by **Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL)** and is fitted with state-of-the-art navigation and communication equipment, sensor and machinery.
- The 105-metre ship displaces approximately 2,350 tonnes and is propelled by two 9,100kw diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6000nm.
- The ship is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high-speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and search and rescue operations.
- It is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill pollution response at sea.
- **Interceptor boats C-450 and C-451** are indigenously designed and built by **L&T Shipyard in Gujarat's Hazira** and is fitted with latest navigation and communication equipment.
- The two 30 metre boats are capable of achieving speeds in excess of 45 knots and are designed for high-speed interception, close coast patrol and low-intensity maritime operations.
- The ship and boats will be deployed extensively for **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** surveillance, coastal security and other duties.

Rajnath Singh approves launch of Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

- In order to give a boost to **domestic defence** and aerospace manufacturing, Defence minister Rajnath Singh has approved the launch of **Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)** with an outlay of **400 crore rupees** for creating state of the art testing infrastructure for this sector.
- The Scheme would run for the duration of **five years** and envisages to set up six to eight new Test Facilities in partnership with private industry. This will facilitate indigenous defence production, consequently reduce imports of military equipment and help make the country self-reliant.
- The projects under the Scheme will be provided with up to 75 percent government funding in the form of Grant-in-Aid. The remaining 25 per cent of the project cost will have to be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicle whose constituents will be Indian private entities and State Governments.

Indian Navy Commissions Seventh MK IV Landing Craft Utility, IN LCU L57

- The **Indian Navy** commissioned its seventh **MK IV Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessel, IN LCU L57**.
- The low-profile ceremony, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, was held in **Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- The IN LCU L57 vessel (Yard no: 2098) was delivered to the Navy by its builder, **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)**, last year. The vessel will be based in Port Blair under the Naval Component Commander (NAVCC) in Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), India's first and only tri-service command.
- Mk IV LCU is a class of indigenously designed and built Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessels operated by the Indian Navy developed as a follow on class of Mk. III LCU. They are indigenously designed and built by state-owned shipyard, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata.
- The vessel is 63 meters long, has an overall beam of 11 meters, a hull draught of 2.2 meters, and displaces around 830 tons.
- The LCU has lift capacity for up to 216 personnel, including 160 fully equipped soldiers and 56 crew and 145 tonnes of military equipment. The vehicle lift capacity is one 65 ton main battle tank (MBT) like the Arjun or two 45 ton tanks like the T-72/80, or four 13.5 ton BMP infantry fighting vehicles (IFV). It is fitted with a hydraulic bow ramp which

enables loading and unloading of combat equipment and vehicles on beaching. Ballast arrangement further ensures desired trim for smooth beaching operations.

- The ship can be deployed for maritime roles like maritime security, beaching, un-beaching, humanitarian relief operations and evacuation from distant islands, search and rescue operations and peacekeeping missions.
- The LCUs are being inducted into the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), India's first and only tri-service command which is responsible for Andaman and Nicobar island territory. The Indian Navy is developing the chain of islands as an amphibious warfare hub to counterbalance China's growing military influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

IAF to launch its squadron Number-18 - Flying Bullets with a fleet of LCA Tejas at its Sullur base near Coimbatore

- The **Indian Air Force** is set to operationalize its squadron called the **Number-18 - Flying Bullets** with a fleet of the **Light Combat Aircraft, LCA Tejas** at its Sullur base near Coimbatore. It will be launched by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria.
- It will be the **second Indian Air Force squadron** to operate with the modern multi-role light fighter aircraft.
- A release from the Defence Ministry says the No.18 Squadron was formed in 1965 and has the distinction of being the first to land and operate from Srinagar.
- It has also produced a Param Veer Chakra awardee during the 1971 war with Pakistan. It has been revived on the 1st April this year at the Sullur base.
- The LCA Tejas is a tailless, fourth generation, compound delta-wing aircraft developed by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. It is equipped with fly-by-wire flight control system, integrated digital avionics and multi-mode radar.
- Its structure is made of composite material. The supersonic combat aircraft is considered the lightest and the smallest of its kind.

Missile Park 'agniprastha' to be arrange in Ins Kalinga

- The Foundation stone of missile park '**Agniprastha**' laid at **INS Kalinga**.
- After the missile park '**Agniprastha**' is constructed, it is going to be devoted to all of the officers, sailors and assist workers of INS Kalinga, who've served within the ENC op-support base since its institution in 1981. The park has additionally been awarded the distinguished Unit Citation of INS Kalinga for the yr 2018-19.
- The goal of '**Agniprastha**' is to glimpse the missile historical past of INS Kalinga from 1981 until now. The missile park has been established with a duplicate of missiles and floor assist gear (GSE), which display the event of missiles operated on behalf of the unit.

UV sanitisation bay set up at Western Naval Command: Navy

- **Indian Navy** stated an **ultraviolet (UV) sanitisation bay** to decontaminate things like tools, masks and clothes was set up at the **naval dockyard** in **Mumbai**, which is a part of the **Western Naval Command**.
- Naval Dockyard (Mumbai) has manufactured a UV sanitisation bay to meet this emerging requirement, the Indian Navy stated.
- The UV bay will be utilised for decontamination of tools, clothes and other miscellaneous items, to control spread of the coronavirus. The challenging task required ingenuity to convert a large common room into a UV bay by fabrication of aluminum sheets electrical arrangements for UV-C lighting, it added.
- The facility is placed at the entry and exit points where it will help in mitigating COVID-19 transmission, the Navy stated.

- A similar facility has also been set up at the naval station in Karanja, where in addition to the UV steriliser, an industrial oven has also been placed to heat up smaller sized items to 60 degree celsius, a temperature known to kill most microbes.

Important Science and Technology

Alabama teen names NASA's pioneering Mars Helicopter "Ingenuity"

- **NASA's Mars Helicopter Ingenuity** will be the first aircraft to fly in a controlled way on another planet.
- **Vaneeza Rupani**, a junior at Tuscaloosa County High School in Northport, Alabama, came up with the name and the motivation behind it during NASA's **"Name the Rover" essay contest**.
- The ingenuity and brilliance of people working hard to overcome the challenges of interplanetary travel are what allow us all to experience the wonders of space exploration.
- Ingenuity is what allows people to accomplish amazing things, and it allows us to expand our horizons to the edges of the universe.
- The helicopter successfully completed its flight-testing program using the 25-foot space simulation chamber at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California. The next flight attempt will be in the actual environment of Mars.

Microwave steriliser developed to disintegrate COVID-19

- **Defence Institute of Advanced Technology, Pune** has developed a **microwave steriliser** named as **ATULYA** to disintegrate COVID-19.
- The virus gets disintegrated by differential heating in the range of 56 degree to 60 degree Celsius temperatures.
- Defence Ministry stated, the product is cost effective solution, which can be operated in portable or fixed installations. This system was tested for human and operator safety and has been found to be safe.
- Depending upon size and shape of various objects, time of sterilisation is from 30 seconds to one minute. The approximate weight of the system is three kilogrammes and it can be used for non-metallic objects only.

DST launches programme on health & risk communication with focus on COVID-19

- **National Council for Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC)**, **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** has launched a programme on health and risk communication **'Year of Awareness on Science & Health (YASH)'** with focus on COVID-19.
- It is a comprehensive and effective science and health communication effort for promoting grass-root level appreciation and response on health and would help saving and shaping the lives of people at large, as well as build confidence, inculcate scientific temper and promote health consciousness among them.
- The programme will encompass development of science, health, and risk communication software, publications, audio-visual, digital platforms, folk performances, trained communicators, especially in regional languages to cater to various cross-sections of the society in the country.
- The programme is aimed at minimizing risks at all levels with the help of public communication and outreach activities, promoting public understanding of common minimum science for community care and health safety measures like personal sanitation and hygiene, physical distancing, maintaining desired collective behaviour and so on.

- It also includes information dissemination mechanisms to reduce the fear of risks and build confidence with necessary understanding for adopting sustainable healthy lifestyles and nurturing scientific culture among masses and societies.
- **YASH** also encompasses improved ability to clarify misperceptions, misbeliefs as well as introduce practices based on authentic knowledge duly verified by scientific processes; trust in scientific competence of solutions and service providers.

DRDO develops Ultra Violet Disinfection Tower for rapid and chemical free disinfection

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO** has developed an **Ultra Violet Disinfection Tower** for rapid and chemical free disinfection of high infection prone areas. Defence Ministry stated, the equipment named **UV blaster** is an **Ultra violet based area sanitiser designed** and developed by Laser Science and Technology Centre.
- The UV Blaster is useful for high tech surfaces like **electronic equipment, computers** and other gadgets in laboratories and offices that are not suitable for disinfection with chemical methods. The product is also effective for areas with large flow of people such as airports, shopping malls, metros, hotels, factories and offices.
- The equipment has six lamps each with 43 watts of UV-C power. For a room of about 12 x 12 feet dimension, the disinfection time is about 10 minutes and 30 minutes for 400 square feet area by positioning the equipment at different places within the room.

ICMR to leverage IBM's virtual agent Watson to enable rapid response to Covid-19 testing facilities

- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India**, have collaborated with tech giant **IBM** on a **virtual assistant** to bolster Rapid Response to **India's Frontline Testing Facilities** on Covid-19.
- The government agencies will leverage IBM's AI-enabled **Watson virtual agent (called Watson Assistant)** on its portal. The bot will respond to specific queries of front line staff and data entry operators from various testing and diagnostic facilities across the country on Covid-19.
- The AI assistant has been deployed on protected pages of the ICMR website. These pages can only be accessed by authorized personnel who are involved with sample collection and testing in hospitals and diagnostic labs, the company stated.
- The AI-enabled virtual agent will be able to comprehend and respond to common queries from approved testing facilities for Covid-19 across India in English and Hindi.
- Watson is also likely to help in on-boarding new data entry operators and staff of diagnostic centres, as authorities expand the Covid-19 test network across the country.

Astronomers Find Jupiter-Like Cloud Bands On Closest Brown Dwarf

- A team of astronomers has discovered that the closest known **brown dwarf, Luhman 16A**, shows signs of **cloud bands** similar to those seen on **Jupiter and Saturn**.
- Brown dwarfs are objects heavier than planets but lighter than stars and typically have **13 to 80 times** the mass of Jupiter.
- **Luhman 16A** is part of a binary system containing a second brown dwarf, **Luhman 16B**. At a distance of 6.5 light-years, it is the third closest system to our Sun after Alpha Centauri and Barnard's Star. Both brown dwarfs weigh about 30 times as much as Jupiter.
- Despite the fact that Luhman 16A and 16B have similar masses and temperatures (about 1,900deg F or 1,000deg C), and presumably formed at the same time, they show markedly different weather. Luhman 16B shows no sign of

stationary cloud bands, instead of exhibiting evidence of more irregular, patchy clouds. Luhman 16B, therefore, has noticeable brightness variations as a result of its cloudy features, unlike Luhman 16A.

- The researchers used an instrument on the Very Large Telescope in Chile to study polarised light from the Luhman 16 system. Polarisation is a property of light that represents the direction that the light wave oscillates. Polarised sunglasses block out one direction of polarisation to reduce glare and improve contrast.

IIT- Kanpur joins hands with Bharat Dynamics Ltd for development of affordable ventilators for Covid-19 treatment

- **Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL)** has come forward for large scale manufacturing of the **ventilators** developed by **Nocca Robotics**, an incubated start-up of **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-K) Kanpur**.
- An MoU to this effect was signed recently between BDL, IIT Kanpur, IIT Kanpur's incubator Foundation for Innovation and Research in Science and Technology (FIRST) and Nocca Robotics Private Limited (NRPL).
- Nocca Robotics designed and developed a high-end yet affordable, **indigenous ventilator** necessary for providing life support to critically ill COVID-19 patients under the overall supervision of IIT Kanpur team led by **Prof Amitabha Bandyopadhyay**.
- Apart from providing support to the critical patient, the ventilator's design also has unique features to safeguard the frontline healthcare workers from exposure to the virus. At the helm of this innovation are three young graduates of IIT Kanpur – Nikhil Kurele, Harshit Rathore and Tushar Agarwal.
- NRPL has moved from inception to production of the fully functional prototype that is in conformity of the technical features and specifications released by the ministry of health and family welfare.

IIT Delhi start-up develops mask that can be reused upto 50 times

- **Nanosafe Solutions** have developed '**NSafe masks**' that can be re-used for **upto 50 times**.
- Nanosafe Solutions is a startup of FITT (Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer) at **IIT Delhi**
- The NSafe mask is 99.2 per cent efficient for bacterial filtration and it complies with ASTM standards for breathability, Dr Anasuya Roy, Founder and CEO of Nanosafe Solutions.
- It has three layers. Inner layer which is in contact with the wearer is made of a hydrophilic cotton layer. The middle layer is made anti-microbial and it is also the filtration layer. The outer layer is made of oil and water repellant to repel the virus.

National Institute of Virology develops country's 1st indigenous antibody-based testing kit COVID KAVACH ELISA

- **National Institute of Virology, Pune**, has developed first indigenous antibody-based **ELISA test kit - COaVID KAVACH** for diagnosis of novel Corona Virus. This test is expected to change the dynamics of COVID-19 testing in the country.
- The kit has displayed high sensitivity and accuracy in the validation tests at different sites. It can test around 90 samples in approximately two and half hours.
- Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan stated that ELISA based testing can easily be operated even at district level. He informed that the technology has been transferred to pharmaceutical manufacturing companies for mass-scale production.

DRDO lab develops automated UV systems to sanitise electronic gadgets, papers & currency notes

- Hyderabad based **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) lab** has developed automated **Ultraviolet systems** to **sanitise electronic gadgets, papers and currency notes**
- Defence Ministry stated, the device - Defence Research Ultraviolet Sanitiser (DRUVS) has been designed to sanitise mobile phones, iPads, laptops, currency notes, cheque leafs, challans, passbooks, paper and envelopes. Bundles of currency notes can be sanitised using DRUVS.

- The DRUVS is having contactless operation which is very important to contain the spread of virus. It provides 360 degree exposure of Ultra Violet to the objects placed inside the cabinet. Once the sanitisation is done, the system goes in sleep mode hence the operator need not wait or stand near the device.

CSIR approves project to develop 'hmAbs' that can neutralize SARS-CoV-2 in patients

- **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR** is leading the fight against COVID-19 using multi-pronged approach and multiple models of engagement.
- CSIR labs themselves are developing technologies and products and are working with industry and PSU partners for deployment while CSIR is also supporting new ideas and projects from other academic and industries through its flagship New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative, **NMITLI programme**
- Given the importance of deploying multiple strategies against COVID-19, CSIR through NMITLI programme has approved a project towards development of **human monoclonal antibodies (hmAbs)** that can neutralize.

ICMR, Bharat Biotech tie up for Indian COVID-19 vaccine

- **The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)** announced a research collaboration with **Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL)** to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The ICMR stated in a statement that it had transferred the virus strain isolated at the National Institute of Virology, Pune (an ICMR institute) to BBIL.
- Work on vaccine development has been initiated between the two partners. **ICMR-NIV** will provide continuous support to BBIL for vaccine development.
- ICMR and BBIL will seek fast-track approvals to expedite vaccine development, subsequent animal studies and clinical evaluation of the candidate vaccine, which will be fully indigenous to India, the ICMR statement stated.

CSIR-NAL develops Non-Invasive Ventilator to treat COVID-19 patients

- **CSIR - National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) Bangalore**, a constituent of lab of CSIR has developed a **Non Invasive BiPAP Ventilator** in a record time of 36 days to treat COVID-19 patients.
- **BiPAP Non-Invasive ventilator** is a microcontroller-based precise closed-loop adaptive control system with a built-in biocompatible “**3D printed manifold & coupler**” with HEPA filter (Highly Efficient Particulate Air Filter).
- These unique features help to alleviate the fear of the virus spread. The system has been certified for safety and performance by NABL accredited agencies.
- The major advantage of this machine is that it is simple to use without any specialized nursing, cost effective, compact and configured with majority of indigenous components.
- This is ideal for treating COVID -19 patients in Wards, Make shift Hospitals, dispensaries and home in current Indian COVID 19 scenario.
- CSIR-NAL has already initiated dialogue with major public/private industries as a partner for mass production.

Researchers at CSIRO develops 'heat resistant' corals to fight bleaching

- The team included researchers from **CSIRO, Australia's national science agency**, the **Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)** and the **University of Melbourne** has successfully developed a potential agent that could help coral reefs increase their heat tolerance, as per the report by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).
- **Coral reefs** came under threat and started vanishing due to repercussions climate change and global warming.
- Climate change has reduced coral cover, and surviving corals are under increasing pressure as water temperatures rise and the frequency and severity of coral bleaching events increase.

- Buerger explained that the team made the coral more tolerant of temperature-induced bleaching by bolstering the heat tolerance of its microalgal symbionts—tiny cells of algae that live inside the coral tissue.
- The research team made the microalgae heat resistant by isolating it and culturing using a technique called “directed evolution” in the specialist symbiont lab at AIMS. Then the cultured microalgae were exposed to warmer temperatures over a period of four years to see if they survive hotter conditions.
- Once the microalgae were reintroduced into coral larvae, the newly established coral-algal symbiosis was more heat tolerant compared to the original one.

IIT Gandhinagar ‘develops’ interactive dashboard to help contain COVID-19 community infection post lockdown

- Researchers at **IIT Gandhinagar** have developed an interactive **COVID-19 dashboard** that they say can help administrators, hospitals as well as public in planning optimised testing for the novel coronavirus, and containing community infection in various post-lockdown scenarios.
- The dashboard provides different epidemiological scenario-specific information at a city-scale, stated the researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGN).
- It is aimed at helping various stakeholders in optimised testing efforts and post-lockdown operations to contain community infection, they stated.
- The dashboard called “**MIR AHD Covid-19 Dashboard**” integrates the complex social and transportation patterns with state-of-the-art epidemic spread models, in addition to testing and quarantining rates, and contact tracing rates.
- MIR AHD Covid-19 is intended to disseminate information to stakeholders and the public that can help them make research-backed decisions during the time of crisis,” stated Udit Bhatia, one of the lead researchers of the project.

South Central Railway develops Rail-Bot to strengthen hospital care

- **South Central Railway** has developed a robotic device, “**Rail-Bot**” (**R-BOT**), that helps assist in **hospital management functions** towards patient care.
- The R-BOT underwent extensive trials and demonstration before being deployed for use in Central Railway Hospital, Lallaguda, Secunderabad.
- It is being used to provide medicines, medical accessories and to serve food to the patients, without any need for physical contact. This will enable doctors, nurses and other support medical staff to stay away from the risks of contacting infections.
- The R-BOT is operated through a unique mobile application developed as part of the innovation, supported by WiFi facility.
- The R-BOT holds sensor-based features to read the body temperature of patients and transmit the same for display on amobile phone. It is capable of raising an alarm in case of any abnormal rise in the temperature readings so as to alert medics attending to the patients.
- The R-BOT has a real-time video camera with pan and tilt functions, acts as two-way audio and video communication with recording, facilitating smooth interaction between patients and doctors. It uses infra-red technology with emergency night lamp and night vision to enable communication even in complete darkness.

ZSI Lists 20 Species Of Amphibians As 'critically Endangered'

- The **Zoological Survey of India** has posted an updated checklist of Indian amphibians on its website, **listing 20 species as critically endangered and 35 as 'endangered'**, an. The 20 'critically endangered' amphibians include some species of frogs found in the Western Ghats of Kerala, Maharashtra and Karnataka and in some hills of the north east.

- The number of amphibian species recorded in the comprehensive checklist, uploaded on the Zoological Survey of India's (ZSI) website, has gone up from 284 in 2009 to 447 now, Goa-based environmentalist Nirmal U Kulkarni, who was part of the checklist updation exercise, stated.
- Among the amphibians listed, 20 species are 'critically endangered' and 35 species as 'endangered', he stated. These include Raorchestes resplendens, a shrubfrog found in the high altitude region around the south Indian peak of Anamudi in Kerala, Raorchestes kaikatti, also known as the Kaikatti bush frog found only in the Nelliampathy hills in the Western Ghats of Kerala and Raorchestes shillongensis species found in Shillong.
- Besides, Pseudophilautus amboli, a rare shrub frog species endemic to the Western Ghats at Amboli in Maharashtra and Jog Falls and Kudremukh in Karnataka, has also been termed as critically endangered, Kulkarni stated.

Vanora Robots launches AI-powered product for hospital disinfection

- **Vanora Robots Pvt Ltd**, a **Mangaluru-based robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) start-up**, has launched an **unmanned robotic platform** to disinfect the rooms in hospitals, schools, etc.
- This fully functional unmanned robotic platform disperses high doses of '**type C**' **ultraviolet rays** to destroy the structure of bacteria, fungal spores, and many types of viruses, including various types of corona viruses.
- The best way to fight anything that is multiplying out of control is to destroy it quicker than it multiplies. When UV light is used in a particular energy, the structure of micro-organisms dies.
- He stated that Vanora Robot can disinfect a **140-sq.ft room** in **4.6 minutes**. During this period, the robot gives full visual access to the person controlling it remotely. It also constantly disinfects the floor it travels on.
- He stated that the specially designed wheels give it multi-directional path, and make it very agile and easy to control without any technical skills or expertise. Vanora Robot's artificial intelligence keeps it safe from wall collision damage, in case of navigational error by the technician, he stated.
- Vanora Robots has already installed these robotic platforms in two hospitals — one in Mangaluru and another in Kanhangad, Kerala. One more will be installed in Udupi district soon.
- Vanora Robots is working on a model that can be used to disinfect schools also. Vanora Robots is a start-up housed in K-Tech Innovation Hub in Mangaluru.

Jaipur based company 'Club First' made robots to help masses

- A **Jaipur based company** made several types of **robots to help** the medical staff and masses amid coronavirus pandemic.
- '**Club First**' have made **robots** which will be used for doing jobs such as **sanitizing hospitals and delivering food in restaurants**.
- '**Club First**' have made India's first service robots and named it as **Sona 1.5 and Sona .5** which is a fully autonomous self navigator robot with multi floor access.
- All service robots work on same technology.
- Their designs have been differentiated depending upon their weights.
- The company is also making firefighting robot.

IIT Guwahati discovers new ways to prevent memory loss due to Alzheimer

- Researchers at **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati** has discovered ideas that can help **prevent or reduce short-term memory losses** associated with **Alzheimer's disease**.
- They studied the neurochemical principles of Alzheimer's, and explored new ways to prevent accumulation of neurotoxic molecules in the brain that are associated with short-term memory loss.

- The IIT Guwahati team reports interesting methods such as application of low-voltage electric field, and the use of **'trojan peptides'** to arrest aggregation of neurotoxic molecules in the brain.
- The development of a cure for Alzheimer's disease assumes importance India as it has the third highest number of Alzheimer's patients in the world, **after China and US**, with more than four million people falling prey to the memory loss associated with it. While current treatments only alleviate some of the symptoms of the disease, there is no disruptive therapeutic approach yet that can treat the underlying causes of Alzheimer's.
- The idea of using 'Trojan peptide' comes from mythological "Trojan Horse" used as subterfuge by the Greeks in the battle of Troy. The researchers have designed Trojan peptides by adopting a similar approach of 'deceit' to impede the aggregation of the amyloid peptide, arrest the formation of toxic fibrillar assemblies, and reduce poisoning of nerve cells that leads to memory loss.
- The research team was headed by **Prof. Vibin Ramakrishnan**, Professor, Department of Biosciences & Bioengineering, IIT Guwahati, and **Prof. Harshal Nemade**, Professor, Department of Electronics and Electrical Engineering, IIT Guwahati.

Researchers at IIT-M develop solar parabolic trough collector

- A **new trough collector** equipped with enhanced energy to serve industries has been developed by **Indian Institute of Madras (IIT-M)**.
- The **'Parabolic Trough Collector'** is a lightweight and low-cost system with high energy efficiency and can operate under the country's varied climatic conditions.
- It can pave way for sustainable energy solutions in agriculture and industrial process heat sectors.
- The **'Trough Collector'** focuses sunlight on a small area where it is absorbed and then utilised for heating and subsequently into energy generation.
- The system can help manufacturers in solar energy devices with higher efficiency
- The concept also follows the Centre's National Solar Mission which has set a target of providing 20,000 MW solar power by 2022.
- **IIT-M professor K Srinivas Reddy** said solar energy is a most propitious technology for clinching sustainability in the energy domain.
- States like Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat have great potential to harness this energy.

US Navy successfully tests a laser weapon that can destroy aircraft mid-flight

- A **US Navy warship** has successfully tested a new **high-energy laser weapon** that can **destroy aircraft mid-flight**. Images and videos provided by the Navy show the amphibious transport dock ship USS Portland executing "the first system-level implementation of a high-energy class solid-state laser" to disable an aerial drone aircraft.
- Navy ships face an increasing number of threats in conducting their missions, including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, armed small boats, and adversary intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems.
- The US Navy has been developing directed-energy weapons (DEWs), to include lasers, since the 1960s.
- DEWs are defined as electromagnetic systems capable of converting chemical or electrical energy to radiated energy and focusing it on a target, resulting in physical damage that degrades, neutralises, defeats, or destroys an adversarial capability.
- The Navy's development of DEWs like the LWSD, provide immediate warfighter benefits and provide the commander increased decision space and response options.

DRDO's RCI develops AI-based Attendance Application

- The **Research Centre Imarat (RCI), DRDO** has developed a **AI-based Attendance Application (AINA)** which allows **non-contact based personnel verification**, using facial features of the person, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic making it unsafe to use contact-based biometric verification for attendance marking systems.
- **AINA** can be deployed with minimal upgradation to the legacy attendance infrastructure with **RFID** (Radio Frequency Identification) readers. AINA can be installed on a normal desktop computer with a GPU based display adapter, a Defence release stated.
- Existing CCTV cameras can be utilised for capturing facial images. Facial features of several thousands of employees can be stored in the computer since for each employee the facial features are encoded in a small (less than 25 KB) file, the release stated.
- The system is fully scalable since the time for identification and verification for each person remains constant even as the number of registered personnel increases, it stated.
- Since only the facial features are saved in an encoded form, the actual face images need not be saved, thereby ensuring privacy and security. Also, the server storing the facial feature database is confined to the organisation premises, it stated.
- AINA has a light-weight installation process. AINA comes with a very intuitive and user-friendly GUI with audio prompts which can be optionally disabled, the release stated.

Southern reaches of Western Ghats yield 3 new plant species

- A team of scientists of the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** have reported the discovery of three new plant species from the evergreen forest patches of the southern end of the Western Ghats in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The three new species found are:

- *Eugenia sphaerocarpa* of the Myrtaceae or Rose apple family. ...
- *Goniothalamus sericeus* of the Annonaceae family of custard apple. ...
- *Memecylon nervosum* of the Melastomataceae (Kayambo or Kaasavu in local parlance) family.
- A good population of ***Eugenia sphaerocarpa*** is growing in the **Kakkayam area** of the Malabar wildlife sanctuary in Kerala above 800 m. The specific epithet 'sphaerocarpa' denotes to the large, showy lemon-yellow spherical fruits. The fruits of *Eugenia* species are known for their palatability and many of them are harvested from the wild with some under cultivation.
- A small number of ***Goniothalamus sericeus*** plants has been found in the **Kanyakumari wildlife sanctuary** in Tamil Nadu. The plants were found at an altitude of 1400 m and the team recorded 50 saplings and 10 flowering plants within an area of 1 square kilometre.
- Mature flowers with characteristic greenish-yellow to beige petals are fragrant while the fruits are very showy and an attractive golden yellow in colour.
- A small population of ***Memecylon nervosum*** was also found at the same sanctuary at an altitude between 700-900 m with more than 10 sub-populations located along the banks of a perennial rivulet.

Indian start-up makes world's first contactless visitor management software

- A Mumbai based start-up VAMS Global has come up with world's first contactless **Visitor Management Software** with **temperature scanner and mask detection**.
- **VAMS SafeGuard** scans body temperature, read faces with a mask on while monitoring social distancing on the premise. The software uses 'AI' to allow entry of visitors, only who are only complying to all COVID protection measures.

- The embedded face and palm recognition sensors provide 100 per cent hands-free user authentication for various application including time and attendance, access control, visitor management, event management, contractor module along with others.
- VAMS Safeguard reads, scans and records one person at a time from a distance of 18" in less than 3-5 seconds.
- The software is ideal for use in pharmaceuticals, hospitality, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, educational institutions, commercial and residential buildings claims the startup.

Indian-American Couple Develops Low-Cost Ventilator For Coronavirus Patients

- An **Indian-American couple** has developed a **low-cost portable emergency ventilator** which is soon to hit the production stage and will be available in India and the developing world to help doctors deal with the COVID-19 patients.
- **Devesh Ranjan**, a professor and associate chair in the prestigious Georgia Tech's George W Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering and his wife **Kumuda Ranjan**, a practising family physician in Atlanta, developed the **emergency ventilator** from concept to prototype in just about three weeks time.
- A ventilator takes over the body's breathing process when a disease has caused the lungs to fail. This gives the patient time to fight off the infection and recover.
- Ventilator of this type, on an average in the US, costs USD 10,000.
- This **Open-AirVentGT** has been developed to address acute respiratory distress syndrome, a common complication for COVID-19 patients which causes their lungs to stiffen, requiring their breathing to be assisted by ventilators

IIT Delhi researchers develop lighter, breathable PPE to fight Covid-19

- **Department of Textile and Fibre Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi** has developed a **breathable and light-weighted PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)** to fight COVID-19.
- We have covered all the basic aspects and it meets the criteria specified by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It is free of bacteria or virus penetration. Our PPE is equipped to cover 99.8 per cent bacteria, stated Dr Ishtiaque.
- He further stated that they consulted more than 150 doctors and the most pressing issue was that it was uncomfortable to wear.
- We have made the overalls more breathable than what doctors use now, with no compromise on safety. There is a minimum requirement of 3.5 kPa (kilopascals) but our PPE has the property of 15 kPa, explained the professor.
- The fabric we used is very soft. When you wear it and work for long hours, you would want it to be comfortable and light. PPE weighs 300 grams while other PPEs weighs anywhere between 400-450 grams. We also emphasised on the reuse factor.
- The PPE can be washed twice and could be used thrice which in turn brings down the cost of purchase by three times.

NASA Renamed Its WFIRST Telescope after 'Mother of Hubble' Nancy Grace Roman

- **NASA** has renamed its **Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST)**, a next-generation space telescope set to launch in **2025**, in honor of **Nancy Grace Roman**, the US space agency's first chief astronomer, who paved the way for space telescopes focused on the broader universe.
- The newly named **Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope -- or Roman Space Telescope**, for short -- will investigate long-standing astronomical mysteries, such as the force behind the universe's expansion, and search for distant planets beyond our solar system

- Dr. Nancy Roman is considered as the Mother of NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, which was launched 30 years ago. It was because of Nancy Grace Roman's leadership and vision that NASA became a pioneer in astrophysics and launched Hubble, the world's most powerful and productive space telescope
- The Roman Space Telescope will investigate long-standing astronomical mysteries, such as the force behind the universe's expansion, and search for distant planets beyond our solar system.
- It will be the successor to NASA's Hubble and Webb Telescopes.

IIT Madras develops light-weight alloy to replace steel, aluminium in cars

- Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)**, along with the **University of North Texas** and **US Army Research Laboratory**, have developed a **magnesium alloy** with significantly improved properties, that can replace **steel and aluminium** in automotive and aerospace components.
- The current industrial application of wrought magnesium alloys in structural components is limited due to their poor moderate or low strength.
- There has been a great deal of focus on lowering the carbon footprint of vehicles by using light-weight material in their bodies. Lighter vehicles consume less fuel to run and are therefore play a strategic role in increasing energy-efficiency. vehicular emissions alone contribute 27 per cent of total carbon dioxide emissions currently.
- Being one of the lightest and energy-efficient structural materials, magnesium alloys are potential candidates to replace steel and aluminum alloys in automotive and aerospace components since their density is two-thirds of aluminum and one-quarter of steel.
- The team is all set to apply the same strategy of processing to other known magnesium alloys and metallic alloys with the intention of obtaining highly efficient stronger materials with superior performance.

IIT Madras dredging methodology helps Odisha's Chilika Lake to triple Irrawaddy Dolphin population

- A research project by the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** has helped **Odisha's Chilika lake**, Asia's largest brackish water body, in tripling the population of the **Irrawaddy dolphins**.
- The searchers conducted geotechnical, hydraulic and satellite imagery studies and developed a **dredging methodology** with minimum impact on the lake ecosystem. The process of dredging consists of the excavation (loosening or dislodging) of the material from the bottom, removal of the loosened material to the dredge vessel and ultimately transportation of the material to the placement area.
- The IIT Madras team developed the dredging methodology identifying the location of dredging along with disposal and selection of suitable dredger with minimum impact on the ecosystem.
- The Chilika Lake Authority has developed an Ecosystem Health Report Card and periodical monitoring of salinity, fish and dolphin, freshwater weeds, birds and other biological parameters are being carried out.

LPU researchers develop 'Oxigeno', a multipurpose algae-based respirator

- A team of Lovely Professional University (LPU) researchers have developed 'Oxigeno', a first of its kind **multipurpose algae-based respirator** which neutralizes **99.3 per cent** of the **harmful gasses** and **particulate matter** in the air. It also boosts the **amount of oxygen passing** through it, as per the LPU official release.
- The researchers stated that the algae has been used in the respirator as the microbes in algae conduct photosynthesis and remove CO2 and other air pollutants while producing oxygen, making the air passing through it more breathable.
- The four-layered respirator aims to provide instant relief, especially to the frontline workers who have to wear masks for long hours.

- The existing **N95 or surgical mask** filters out pollutants and microbes but are incapable of filtering out the pollutant gases such as - Carbon Dioxide, Nitrogen & Sulphur Oxides, Carbon Monoxide and VOCs and odours emitted by the disinfectants and cleansers which are prevalent in the enclosed wards of the hospitals.
- Oxigeno claims to filter out particles ranging from 10 micrometres to 0.44 micrometres with the help of four layers of filters comprising of HEPA filter which helps in filtering out dust particles as well.
- Researchers further mentioned that the additional algae cartridge further enriches the purified air with Oxygen, which is especially helpful for those who are suffering from respiratory diseases like asthma, and feel suffocated and uneasy while wearing a mask.
- Oxigeno is made of an antimicrobial and biodegradable plastic called PLA-Active which would prevent the growth of bacteria and other contaminants on its surface. Also, wearing a mask for long hours causes rashes to people with sensitive skin. To solve this, a design innovation done by the researchers is the use of silicon membrane around the nose and mouth area of the respirator which is much gentler on the skin, LPU noted.

NASA astronauts aboard the International Space Station after Dragon capsule successfully docks

- **SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft** with **two NASA astronauts** successfully docked with the **International Space Station** after a historic launch from the **Kennedy Space Center in Florida**. It has marked the dawn of a new age in commercial space travel.
- NASA astronauts **Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley**, the pair chosen for the mission because of their experience and expertise flying new vehicles, reported that the spacecraft was performing well.
- SpaceX became the first private company to launch people into the orbit, a feat achieved previously by only three governments the US, Russia and China.

Revision Points

Institutions/Persons	Things to be Discovered
LU Researchers	Oxigeno (Algae-based respirator)
IIT Madras	Light-weight Alloy
IIT Delhi	Lighter, Breathable PPE
Devesh Ranjan & Kumuda Ranjan	Low - cost portable emergency ventilator
DRDO's RCI	AI based Attendance Application
IIT Madras	Solar parabolic trough collector
IIT Guwahati	New ways to prevent memory loss due to Alzheimer
Club First	Robots to help masses
Vanora Robots	AI – powered product for hospital disinfection
South Central Railway	Rail-Bot
IIT Gandhinagar	Interactive COVID-19 dashboard
CSIRO	Developing of 'Heat resistant corals to fight bleaching
CSIR - NAL	Non-Invasive Ventilator
ICMR & Bharat Biotech	Indian COVID-19 Vaccine
CSIR	Developing of HmAbs
DRDO Lab	UV systems to sanitize electronic gadgets,

	papers & currency notes
National Institute of Virology, Pune	ELISA test kit - COaVID KAVACH
Defence Institute of Advanced Technology, Pune	Microwave steriliser ATULYA
DRDO	Ultra violet based area sanitiser
Indian Council of Medical Research & IBM	India's Frontline Testing Facilities on Covid-19
BDL & IIT Kanpur	Ventilators developed by Nocca Robotics
Nanosafe Solutions	NSafe masks

Important Ranking and Indexes

Index	India's Rank	Top	Released By
Global Energy Transition Index	74	Sweden followed by Switzerland, Finland	World Economic Forum

Chhattisgarh tops among other states in providing employment to workers under MGNREGS

- Chhattisgarh has topped the list of states in providing employment to over 18 lakh unskilled labourers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The national participation of the workers working in the state is **24 per cent**, which is the highest in the country.
- Rajnandgaon, Janjgir-Champa and Mahasamund districts of Chhattisgarh are at the top in terms of maximum employment to MGNREGS workers at the state level.
- Rajasthan has provided employment to **10.79 lakh workers** under the rural employment guarantee scheme and Uttar Pradesh is at **third position** with around **9.06 lakh workers** engaged by it.

India is placed 3rd among countries in scientific publication

- India's gross expenditure in R&D has tripled between 2008 & 2018 driven mainly by Govt sector and scientific publications have risen placing the country internationally among the top few.
- This is as per the R&D Statistics and Indicators 2019-20 based on the national S&T survey 2018 brought out by the National Science and Technology Management Information (NSTMIS), Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- The report shows that with the rise in publication, the country is globally at **the 3rd position** on this score as per the NSF database, **3rd in the number of Ph.D. in science & engineering**. The **number of researchers per million** population has **doubled** since 2000.
- The survey included more than 6800 S&T Institutions spread across varied sectors like central government, state governments, higher education, public sector industry, and private sector industry in the country, and a response rate of more than 90% was achieved.

India's gross expenditure in R&D has tripled between 2008 & 2018

- The **Gross expenditure on R&D** (GERD) in the country has been consistently increasing over the years and has nearly **tripled** from Rs. 39,437.77 crore in 2007-08 to Rs. 1,13,825.03 crore in 2017-18.
- India's per capita R&D expenditure has increased to PPP \$ 47.2 in 2017-18 from PPP \$ 29.2 in 2007-08.
- India spent 0.7% of its GDP on R&D in 2017-18, while the same among other developing BRICS countries was Brazil 1.3%, Russian Federation 1.1%, China 2.1% and South Africa 0.8%.

Extramural R&D support by central S&T agencies has increased significantly

- DST and DBT were the two major players contributing 63% and 14%, respectively of the total extramural R&D support in the country during 2016-17.
- Women participation in extramural R&D projects has increased significantly to 24% in 2016-17 from 13% in 2000-01 due to various initiatives undertaken by the Government in S&T sector
- As on 1st April 2018, nearly 5.52 lakh personnel were employed in the R&D establishments in the country

The number of researchers per mn populations has doubled since 2000

- Number of researchers per million population in India has increased to **255 in 2017** from 218 in 2015 and 110 in 2000.
- India's R&D expenditure per researcher was 185 ('000 PPP\$) during 2017-18 and was ahead of Russian Federation, Israel, Hungary, Spain and UK.
- India occupies **3rd rank in terms of number of Ph. D.'s awarded in Science and Engineering (S&E)** after USA (39,710 in 2016) and China (34,440 in 2015).

India is placed 3rd among countries in scientific publication as per NSF database

- During 2018, India was ranked at **3rd, 5th and 9th in scientific publication output** as per the NSF, SCOPUS and SCI database respectively
- During 2011-2016, India's growth rate of scientific publication as per the SCOPUS and SCI database was 8.4% and 6.4% as against the world average of 1.9% and 3.7%, respectively.
- India's share in global research publication output has increased over the years as reflected in publication databases.

India is ranked at 9th position in terms of Resident Patent Filing activity in the world

- During 2017-18 a total of 47,854 patents were filed in India. Out of which, **15,550 (32%) patents** were filed by **Indian residents**
- Patent applications filed in India are dominated by disciplines like Mechanical, Chemical, Computer/Electronics, and Communication.
- According to WIPO, India's Patent Office stands at the **7th position** among the top 10 **Patent Filing Offices in the world**

IAMAI's latest report states India has more internet users in rural areas than urban

- **Internet users** in **rural areas surpassed** those in **urban areas** for the first time, according to the '**Digital in India**' report by the **Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)**.
- As of last November, there were **227 million** active internet users in **rural areas** which is 10% more than around **205 million** in **urban areas**. In total, India had **504 million** active internet users.
- In rural India, the number of people actively accessing the internet on a daily basis increased by 30 million since March last year. However, the time spent on the internet is higher in urban India compared to the rural areas.
- Almost 70% of the active internet users in India are daily users where nine out of 10 in urban India access it at least once a week.
- India has **second largest** number of internet users in the Globe. Topped by **China** which has **850 million users**.
- **Accessibility to affordable devices** and **cheap data plans** were a **major boost** behind the growth of **India's internet users**. Also, the preferred device for accessing the internet was mobile in both urban and rural areas.
- Around **one-third of the users** access the internet for over an hour during Sundays and holidays as compared to a normal week day.

Delhi ranks top in Internet penetration, Kerala comes second

- Delhi has registered the **highest Internet penetration**, while **Kerala ranks second**, according to a study by **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)**.
- While **Delhi** retains **top spot** in **terms of penetration**, at a city level, **Mumbai** has **highest number of Internet users** at estimated 13 million, with Delhi coming is second with 11.3 million.
- Bengaluru comes a distant third with an estimated 6.6 million users, while Kolkata (6.3 million) and Chennai (6 million) complete the top 5 cities in terms or number of users.
- Significantly, eastern states together have seen a **24 per cent** increase in the **Internet population** in November 2019 compared with March 2019.
- Jharkhand and Bihar witnessed 48 per cent and 36 per cent increase in internet population respectively, which is higher compared to any other Indian states.
- In terms of age-wise demographics, **two-third of Internet users** in India are in the age group of **12-29 years** and this age group corresponds to **more than 70 per cent** of Internet users in the **rural**.
- The proportion of **12-29 years** and **30 years** is about **50:50** in Mumbai and Chennai.

Unemployment rate soars to 27.11% amid COVID-19 pandemic: CMIE

- India's **unemployment** rate **surged to 27.11 per cent** for the week ended May 3 from the level of **6.74 per cent** in the week ended March 15.
- The data is from the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)**.
- Unemployment rate had moderated to 21.05 per cent in the previous week (which ended April 26) from 26.19 per cent in the week before.
- Employment in MSMEs and unorganised sector is expected to be hit sharply.
- The Mumbai-based think tank stated the rate of unemployment was the highest in the urban areas, which include the majority of the red zones due to the COVID-19 cases, at 29.22 per cent, as against 26.16 per cent for the rural areas. In the previous week ended April 26, the urban unemployment rate had stood at 21.45 per cent and the rural unemployment rate at 20.88 per cent.
- State-wise data shows that as of April-end, **Puducherry** had the **highest number of unemployment at 75.8 per cent**, followed by neighbouring Tamil Nadu 49.8 per cent, Jharkhand 47.1 per cent and Bihar 46.6 per cent. Maharashtra's unemployment rate was recorded at 20.9 per cent, while the same for Haryana stood at 43.2 per cent, Uttar Pradesh at 21.5 per cent and Karnataka at 29.8 per cent
- **Hilly states** had the **lowest incidence of unemployment** as of April-end, with the unemployment rate in Himachal Pradesh at 2.2 per cent, Sikkim at 2.3 per cent and Uttarakhand at 6.5 per cent, the data showed.

Bengaluru airport voted as best regional airport in India & Central Asia

- Bengaluru's **Kempegowda International Airport** stated it was voted by customers as the **best regional airport in India & Central Asia** for the third time in four years at the **2020 World Airport Awards**.
- For an 11-year old airport, it's a remarkable achievement, stated MD and CEO of BIAL (Bangalore International Airport Limited), Hari K Marar.
- According to the statement, the World Airport Awards are the most prestigious accolades for the airport industry, voted by customers in the largest, annual global airport customer satisfaction survey.
- They are regarded as the quality benchmark for the world airport industry, assessing customer service and facilities across over 550 airports. The survey and awards are independent of any airport control or input, it added.

- The Awards are based on the World Airport Survey questionnaires completed by over 100 nationalities of airport customers during the six-month survey period. The survey evaluated the customer experience across airport service and product key performance indicators (from check-in, arrivals, transfers, shopping, security and immigration through to departure at the gate), BIAL stated

IIM Bangalore ranked among top 50 global B-schools in executive education

- **Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB)** stated it has been ranked among the **Top 50 global schools**, for the second year in succession, in the **Financial Times Executive Education 2020 Rankings**, released.
- IIMB stated in a statement it is the only management school from India to feature in this prestigious global list of executive education providers.
- The Financial Times announced its annual list of top 85 B-schools for custom programmes, top 75 B- schools for open programmes and a combined ranking for the Top 50 providers of executive education (open plus custom programmes).
- In this list, IIMB is ranked **45th** in the combined ranking categories, **52nd** in the custom, and **55th** in the open programmes, the statement stated.
- Participating schools are rated on several parameters by organisations that commission executive education courses (for custom programmes), by participants of courses (for open programmes), and on the data reported by the Business schools.
- Parameters include course design, faculty, teaching methods and facilities, it was stated.

State brings down infant mortality rate

- **Kerala** has brought its **infant mortality rate (IMR)**, down from 10 to the single digit of 7 (per 1,000 live births), according to the latest **Sample Registration System (SRS)** bulletin.
- This means that Kerala has achieved the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** target for IMR reduction, set at eight for the year 2020. The State's **IMR for rural areas is 9** and **for urban areas, 5**.
- Kerala is also the only State to have achieved the single digit IMR of 7 amongst bigger States, **the closest being Delhi** with an **IMR of 13**.
- Among smaller States, **Goa and Sikkim** have done as well as Kerala, with an **IMR of 7**, while Nagaland and Mizoram have also done extremely well with IMR figures of 4 and 5.
- Kerala's birth rate has also reduced fractionally from **14.2% to 13.9%**, which is also the lowest in the country among bigger States.

India up at 74th place on WEF's global energy transition index

- **India** has **moved up two positions** to rank **74th** with a score of 51.5% on a global '**Energy Transition Index**' with improvements on all key parameters of economic growth, energy security and environmental sustainability, According to the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- In its report, the WEF study measuring readiness for clean energy transition in 115 economies showed that 94 have made progress since 2015, but environmental sustainability continues to lag.
- **Sweden (74.2%)** has topped the **Energy Transition Index (ETI)** for the **third consecutive year** and is followed by **Switzerland(73.4%)** and **Finland(72.4%)** in the top three.
- Surprisingly, France (ranked 8th) and the UK (7th) are the only G20 countries in the top ten.
- For India, gains have come from a government-mandated renewable energy expansion programme, now extended to **275 GW by 2027**. India has also made significant strides in energy efficiency through bulk procurement of LED bulbs,

smart meters, and programs for labelling of appliances. Similar measures are being experimented to drive down the costs of electric vehicles.

- India's improvements have come across all three dimensions of the energy triangle -- economic development and growth, energy access and security, and environmental sustainability.
- It indicates a strong positive trajectory, driven by strong political commitment and an enabling policy environment.

Child, maternal malnutrition leads to 68% of under-five deaths: Lancet study

- The government has launched many schemes to improve food and nutrition access, especially for women and children, **68% of the under-five deaths in India** are caused **due to child and maternal malnutrition**, a **Lancet paper revealed**.
- **Low birth weight** and **short gestation** lead to **83% of the neonatal deaths**.
- The Lancet report has the first comprehensive estimates of district-level trends of child mortality in India since 2000 and details district-level patterns of child growth failure.
- The findings of the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative show that though the child mortality and child growth failure indicators have improved substantially across India from **2000 to 2017**, the inequality and variations among districts have risen.
- U5MR and NMR have been decreasing in almost all districts of India, the progress in this decline has varied because of which the inequality in these rates has increased among districts within many states and the worst hit are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam.
- In **Uttar Pradesh**, **48%** of the districts fell in the highest priority category of **high NMR** and low rate of reduction for the nationwide distribution of the district-level rates. In Uttar Pradesh, which had the **highest child mortality rate in 2017 among the states**.
- In **Assam**, which had the **second highest child mortality rate in 2017**, the highest priority category of **high U5MR and NMR** and low annual rate of reduction was concentrated in the southern part of the state.
- The study pointed out that India would not meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 NMR target, adding that **34%** of the districts in India would need higher **U5MR reduction** and **60% districts** would require **higher NMR reduction** to individually meet the SDG targets.

Hindujas share second spot with Reuben brothers in UK Rich List 2020

- Two sets of Indian-origin siblings dominate the annual tally of Britain's wealthiest as the **Hinduja and Reuben brothers** share the **second spot** with a fortune of **16 billion pounds each**, while British inventor-entrepreneur **James Dyson** tops 'The Sunday Times Rich List 2020' with **16.2 billion pounds**.
- Srichand and Gopichand Hinduja, who run the Hinduja Group of companies, lost 6 billion pounds to slip from the top slot in last year's list. Mumbai-born David and Simon Reuben lost 2.66 billion pounds over the past year, but their second position in the tally remains unchanged from 2019.

After China, India is now the second largest producer of PPE coveralls during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **India** has become the **world's second-largest manufacturer** of **personal protective equipment (PPE)** body coveralls within a short time span of two months.
- **China** is the **world's leading producer** of PPE body coveralls, crucial to safeguard against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The ministry has taken steps to ensure that only certified players across the entire supply chain are allowed to supply body coveralls to governments.

About Textiles Committee

- The Textiles Committee is a statutory body established in 1963 through an Act of Parliament and is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.
- The committee is tasked with the functions of establishing laboratories for the testing of textiles and textile machinery and providing for their inspection and examination, besides other functions which flow from the main objective of ensuring the quality of textiles products and textiles machinery. **Ajit Chavan**, Secretary, Textiles Committee.

Anish Kapoor tops list of "Most Successful Indian Artists Alive Today 2020"

- **London-based Anish Kapoor**, has topped the **Hurun India Art List 2020** for the second year with Rs 44.39 crores.
- New Delhi-based painter **Rameshwar Broota** shot up 9 places to second place with sales of Rs 11.89 crores, followed by modernist painter **Krishen Khanna** in third place with Rs 6.87 crores.
- The report launched by **Hurun Research Institute and Artprice.com** reveals that Mumbai-based artists Atul Dodiya, and Jitish Kallat, broke into the Top 10 for the first time.
- Twenty-two percent are women artists, led by modernist painter Arpita Singh. 11 women artists make it to the Top 50 List, the List revealed.
- The most popular form of the art in Hurun India Art List 2020 is Painting (with 28 artists), followed by Sculpting (with 6 artists). Contemporary art style is the most favored one amongst other art styles by the artists. Abstract, traditional, surrealism, and modernist art styles also seem to have a growing influence on Indian art.

With investments worth USD 14.67 billion, Singapore was top source of FDI in fiscal year 2019-20

- **Singapore** was the top source of **foreign direct investment** into India for the **second consecutive financial year**, accounting for about 30 per cent of FDI inflows in 2019-20. In the past two financial years, FDI from Singapore has surpassed that from **Mauritius**.
- In the last financial year, India attracted USD 14.67 billion in FDI from Singapore, whereas it was USD 8.24 billion from Mauritius, according to the data of the Department for Promotion of Industry and InternTrade (DPIIT).
- In 2018-19, Singapore's FDI aggregated at USD 16.22 billion, while that from Mauritius it was USD 8.08 billion. According to experts, Singapore has been able to outpace Mauritius with its ease of doing business policies, simplified tax regime and a large number of private investors.
- Total FDI into India including re-invested earnings and other capital in the last fiscal grew by 18 per cent to USD 73.45 billion as against USD 62 billion in 2018-19.
- Foreign investments are considered crucial for India as it needs huge investments for overhauling the infrastructure sector such as ports, airports and highways to boost growth. FDI helps in improving the country's balance of payments and strengthen the rupee value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar.

Virat Kohli only cricketer in Forbes' 2020 list of world's highest paid athletes

- **India skipper Virat Kohli** is the **only cricketer to feature in Forbes' list of the top 100 highest paid athletes in the world for the year 2020**.
- Kohli had an estimated total earnings of **\$26 million** (\$24m from endorsements and \$2m from salary/winnings). He made a jump of over 30 places from 2019, as he was positioned at the 66th spot in this year's list.
- This is the second year in a row that Kohli has become the only Indian to feature in the Forbes' list of top 100 highest-paid athletes. In 2019, he was positioned at the 100th place with an estimated earnings of \$25 million.
- Meanwhile, **Swiss tennis great Roger Federer** has become the first from his sport to **top Forbes' list of highest paid athletes**. With an estimated **\$106.3 million** earned over the past 12 months.

- The three athletes immediately below Federer are all football players with **Ronaldo** on **second** with estimated earnings of **\$105 million**. His arch rival and Argentine great **Lionel Messi** is **third** with an estimated **\$104 million** while **Brazil's Neymar** comes **fourth** with \$95.5 million

Important Books and Authors

Authors/ Released by	Books
Girish Kuber	Shivaji in South Block: The Unwritten History of a Proud People
John Bolton (Published by Simon & Schuster)	The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir
Prahlad Singh Patel	Prof. B. B. Lal -India Rediscovered (e-Book)
VN Thapar & Neha Dwivedi (Published by Penguin Random House)	Vijyant at Kargil: The Life of a Kargil Hero
Omid Scobie and Carolyn Durand (Biopic on Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's life)	Finding Freedom: Harry and Meghan and the Making of A Modern Royal Family
Vadhan (Bommadevara Sai Chandravadhan)	Fear of God (Published by TreeShade Books)
Fang Fang (Published by HarperNonFiction)	Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City
Ruskin Bond (published by Speaking Tiger's children's imprint Talking Cub)	Hop On: My Adventures on Boats, Trains and Planes
JK Rowling	The Ickabog

Union HRD Minister e-Launches seven titles on "Psycho-Social Impact of Pandemic & Lockdown and How to Cope With"

- Union HRD Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' e-Launched print as well as e-editions of the set of seven titles on **"Psycho-Social impact of pandemic & lockdown and how to Cope With"** under the corona studies series published by NBT India.
- To counter these formidable circumstances that the world is facing these days, NBT has brought out these remarkable and unparalleled set of books.
- The Corona Studies Series has been especially conceptualized by NBT to document and to provide relevant reading materials for all age-groups for the post-Corona readership needs, under the first-sub series of books focused on **'Psycho-Social Impact of Pandemic and How to Cope With'** prepared by a Study Group comprising of seven psychologists and counsellors constituted by NBT.
- The titles include **Vulnerable in Autumn: Understanding the Elderly** (Lead Researchers: Jitendra Nagpal and Aprajita Dixit; Illustrator: Aloy Ghoshal), **The Future of Social Distancing: New Cardinals for Children, Adolescents and Youth** (Lead Researchers: Aprajita Dixit and Rekha Chauhan Illustrator: Partha Sengupta); **The Ordeal of Being Corona**

Warriors: An Approach to Medical and Essential Service Providers (Lead Researchers: Meena Arora and Sonie Sidhu; Illustrator: Saumya Shukla), **New Frontiers At Home: An Approach to Women, Mothers and Parents** (Lead Researchers: Tarun Uppal and Sonie Sidhu; Illustrator: Arya Prahaj), **Caught in Corona Conflict: An Approach to the Working Population** (Lead Researchers: Jitendra Nagpal and Tarun Uppal; Illustrator: Fazruddin), **Making Sense of It All: Understanding the Concerns of Persons With Disabilities** (Lead Researchers: Rekha Chauhan and Harsheeta; Illustrator: Viky Arya); and **Alienation And Resilience: Understanding Corona Affected Families** (Lead Researchers: Harsheeta and Meena Arora; Illustrator: Neetu Sharma).

- Seven videos complementing the book are also being launched along with the books, giving an overview of the content.

Important Sports News

Cricket

India lose top spot in ICC Test rankings for first time since October 2016

- The Virat Kohli-led Indian cricket team was dethroned from the top spot in the **ICC Test rankings** for the first time in close to four years after cricket parent's body announced the latest rankings. India had yielded the top spot for since October 2016.
- In the latest update, that rates all matches played since May 2019 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent, **Australia (116)** have taken over from India as the top ranked side in the ICC Men's Test Team Rankings with **New Zealand (115)** remaining in second place. **India** are now third with 114 points.
- South Africa have suffered the biggest rating fall of eight points, which sees them drop below Sri Lanka into sixth place. They had won three series in the period culled, while they have lost eight of their nine Tests since February 2019, playing against Sri Lanka, India and England.
- India still lead the ICC World Test Championship, a league comprising six series played by each of the top nine Test sides.
- In the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings, reigning World champions England (127) have increased their lead over India from six to eight points. New Zealand remain in third place, three points behind India.

Anil Kumble-led ICC Committee calls for ban on saliva to shine ball

- **Anil Kumble-led panel ICC Cricket Committee** recommended **banning the use of saliva** to shine the ball among several other changes to ICC regulations to mitigate the risks posed by the COVID-19 virus.
- The Committee also noted the medical advice that it is highly unlikely that the virus can be transmitted through sweat and saw no need to prohibit the use of sweat to polish the ball whilst recommending that enhanced hygiene measures are implemented on and around the playing field.
- The Committee also recommended that the use of technology is increased to support the appointments of a wider pool of umpires from around the world and has proposed an additional DRS review per team per innings is introduced in each format as an interim measure.

BCCI nominates 4 players for Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award

- **The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** nominated India opener **Rohit Sharma** for the prestigious **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award 2020** while pacer **Ishant Sharma**, **Shikhar Dhawan** and India women's cricketer **Deepti Sharma** have been nominated for the **Arjuna Awards**.

- Rohit became the first player in the history to score five ODI centuries in a single edition of the World Cup. He was also named the ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year for 2019. He holds the record of becoming the first player to score twin centuries in his maiden Test appearance and the first batsman to score four T20I centuries.
- Shikhar holds the record to score the fastest century in red-ball cricket on debut. He is also the only batsman in the world to have won consecutive golden bats in the ICC Champions Trophy.
- Ishant Sharma has been spearheading the Indian bowling attack, mostly in the traditional format of the game and holds the record for most wickets by an Indian pacer outside Asia.
- All-rounder, Deepti Sharma has been impressive in both the departments of the game. She currently holds the record for the highest individual score among the Indian women cricketers and is also the only spinner from the country to take six wickets in an ODI.

Football

FIFA Under-17 women's world cup in India rescheduled to February 17

- **FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup**, which India will be hosting, has been rescheduled to **February 17 till March 7, 2021**, the football governing body announced.
- The showpiece event was previously scheduled to be played from November 2, 2020, in India and was later postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- The apex body also announced that the showpiece event will keep the original eligibility criteria despite the delay.
- The FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup has also been rescheduling. The mega event will now take place between January 20 and February 6, 2021, in Panama and Costa Rica.
- The Women's U-17 World Cup in India was originally scheduled to be held across five cities Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Navi Mumbai and Kolkata. The coronavirus pandemic has forced many tournaments to be postponed. The Tokyo Olympics 2020 have also been pushed to next year.

FIFA and WHO launch campaign to help domestic violence victims amid coronavirus lockdown

- **FIFA, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Commission** have announced the **#SafeHome campaign** designed to support women and children at risk of domestic violence during the coronavirus pandemic.
- With many families all over the world quarantined during the pandemic, there have been spikes in recent reports of domestic violence as at-risk women and children are forced into dangerous situations at home.
- The three organisations have launched a **five-part video campaign** designed to raise awareness, with several past and present footballing stars taking part.
- Among the players featured are Alvaro Arbeloa, Rosana Augusto, Vitor Baia, Khalilou Fadiga, Matthias Ginter, David James, Annike Krahn, Marco Materazzi, Milagros Menendez, Noemi Pascotto, Graham Potter, Mikael Silvestre, Kelly Smith, Oliver Torres and Clementine Toure.
- Together with the World Health Organization and the European Commission, we are asking the football community to raise awareness to this intolerable situation that threatens particularly women and children in their own home, a place where they should feel happy, safe and secure, stated FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Others

PSG crowned Ligue 1 champions as season ended amid coronavirus crisis

- **Paris St Germain** have been awarded their seventh **Ligue 1 title** in eight years after the season was ended amid the COVID-19 crisis, the **French League (LFP)** stated .
- PSG had a comfortable 12-point lead over second-placed **Olympique de Marseille** when the season was suspended with 10 games left as part of French government's measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.
- With some clubs having played 27 games and others 28, the LFP drew the standings according to a performance index - the number of points per game weighed by head-to-head record.
- PSG therefore ended the season on 2.52 points with OM on 2 and third-placed **Stade Rennais** on 1.79.
- According to the standings, Marseille qualify for the Champions League group stage with Rennes going through a qualification playoff.
- The LFP also crowned Lorient as Ligue 2 champions in a conference call after the standings were frozen after all teams had played 28 matches.
- Lorient had 54 points after losing four of their last five games with Lens on 53, leaving third-placed AC Ajaccio (52) and fourth-placed Troyes (51) in Ligue 2.

Australia bans use of saliva as sports activities set to return

- **Australia** banned **saliva and sweat to shine** the cricket ball as the federal government released guidelines for the gradual return of professional and recreational sport in the coronavirus pandemic, cricket website ESPNCricinfo reported.
- **Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)** made the guidelines with the help of medical experts, sporting bodies, and federal and state governments.
- Under the AIS framework, restrictions on sport are currently outlined as being at "Level A" restricting all training except that of the individual kind.
- But soon there will be a shift to "Level B" and it will allow net sessions in which batters will be able to face bowlers. However, bowlers will be limited for the session. Level B will also allow for unrestricted fielding sessions.
- Under Level B, warm-up drills involving unnecessary person to person contact has not been allowed. Ball shining with sweat/saliva has also been not allowed under training, ESPNCricinfo reported.
- The third and final "Level C", will be permitted later in the year and it is outlined as: "Full training and competition. No ball shining with sweat/saliva in training."
- Shining the ball is a major thing for bowlers in trying to extract some swing from the match. As the game starts swaying in favour of batsmen by each passing day, bowlers have to try everything they can in trying to trouble the batsmen.

Commonwealth Youth Games 2021 rescheduled to 2023

- The **2021 Commonwealth Youth Games** was postponed to **2023** because of clash of dates with **Tokyo Olympics**, which has been pushed back by a year due to the **coronavirus pandemic**.
- The Tokyo Olympics were originally scheduled to be held from July 23 to August 8 this year but the quadrennial event was postponed by a year last month owing to the pandemic, which has so far claimed over 2 lakh lives globally.
- The Commonwealth Games Federation Executive Board have decided to explore rescheduling options for the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Games, the CGF stated in a statement.
- The impact of the pandemic on the global international sporting calendar means that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics have now been rescheduled to the summer of 2021 during the original dates of the Youth Games.

- Following positive discussions, the CGF has agreed to consider the best alternative options and time frames for staging the event in the future, potentially in 2023, it added.

World Championships 2021 postponed to November-December, to be held in Carolina Marin Stadium

- The **Badminton World Federation (BWF)** announced that the **World Championships in 2021** is being moved from **August** to later in the year. The prestigious tournament is now scheduled to be held from **November 29 to December 5** at the Carolina Marin Stadium in **Huelva, Spain**.
- The World Championships was scheduled to be held in August but it has now been postponed due to the delay in the Tokyo Olympics. The Games were postponed to 2021 due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has had a massive impact on the global sporting calendar.
- "The Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Spanish Badminton Federation (FESBA) can confirm the BWF World Championships traditionally scheduled for August 2021 will now take place at the end of 2021 from Monday 29 November to Sunday 5 December," BWF stated
- The new schedule will allow players to have a clear focus for 2021 in which they will have dual objectives of both the Olympic Games and World Championships, according to the BWF.
- BWF President Poul-Erik Hoyer stated changing the BWF World Championships to late November was in the best interests of the sport.

FINA postpones 2021 Fukuoka world championships to May 2022

- The **2021 World Aquatics Championships** in Japan will now be held in **2022**, the sport's governing body FINA stated in a statement.
- The event was initially scheduled for the summer of 2021 from **July 16 to August 1** in the Japanese city of Fukuoka to **May 12 to May 29 of 2022** due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.
- The postponement was done after the discussion with the broadcasters, athletes and national federations following the similar moves of the athletics and soccer for the world championships in Oregon and women's European soccer championship.
- However, the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in March caused FINA to reconsider its own dates so there won't be any clash and eventually make the adjustment to postpone the event to May 13-29.

World Rugby launches women coaching Rugby Toolkit

- The **World Rugby** launched an **online Women Coaching Rugby Toolkit** aimed at assisting unions in increasing the number of female rugby coaches at every level of the game.
- Women currently make up 25 per cent of the rugby playing population worldwide. The toolkit is designed to create a strong framework to address barriers women are facing in rugby.
- Earlier in the week, the apex body published guidelines for the safe return to rugby activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The guidelines have two core sections containing important information.
- The first section provides safety information to everyone involved in the game including players, coaches, support, and administrative staff.
- The second section provides a framework around which national unions can prepare best-practice policies and guidelines for return to activity that is appropriate to their local setting, complying with national guidelines on social distancing and travel restrictions.

SAI forms 6-member panel to prepare SOP for phased resumption of training

- The **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** has formed a six-member committee to prepare a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for a phased resumption of training across sporting disciplines at all the centres once the coronavirus-forced national lockdown is lifted.
- The six-member panel will be **headed by** SAI secretary **Rohit Bharadwaj** and will have CEO Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Rajesh Rajagopalan, Executive Director (Operations) SS Roy, SS Sarla, Col BK Nayak and Assistant Director TOPS Sachin K as members.
- The panel will draft a SOP, describing protocols and preventive measures to be observed by all stakeholders, including trainees, coaches, technical and non-technical support staff, NSFs, administrators, mess and hostel staff and visitors, once training resumes.
- The SOP will include in detail the guidelines to be followed on entry norms, sanitisation guidelines, precautions to be taken in common areas, and by athletes while travelling to and from the centre.
- The recommendations of the committees are being made in consultation with respective National Sporting Federations and other stakeholders, and will be sent to the Sports Ministry for final approval.

China Wins FIDE Chess.com Online Nations Cup

- **China** won the inaugural **FIDE Chess.com** Online Nations Cup. Their Superfinal with the **USA** ended 2-2 with China having draw odds for winning the round-robin phase.
- **India finished at 5th rank.**
- The Superfinal concluded six days of online competitive chess at the highest level between six international teams full of top grandmasters. Co-organized by FIDE and Chess.com, the event had a peak of over a million concurrent viewers across all languages and broadcast partners.

UEFAs eEuro 2020 won by Italy

- With the **Euro2020 postponed until next summer due to the coronavirus pandemic**, the **eEuro 2020 finals** were **conducted** this weekend as 16 nations came together to compete in the biggest international virtual soccer championship ever.
- The 16 teams -- who were made up of between two and four gamers from their national efootball team, playing on Konami's eFootball Pro Evolution Soccer 2020 on Playstation 4 -- entered the final two-day phase of the competition having been drawn into four groups.
- **Italy** has won **UEFA eEURO 2020**, **beating Serbia** in the final to clinch the inaugural virtual European Championship.
- The format of the tournament was similar to the template for UEFA EURO 2020, involving a qualification phase and culminating in the final tournament.

English Premier League to restart on June 17

- **The Premier League season** will restart on **June 17** provided all safety requirements have been put in place.
- The season will get back under way with Aston Villa v Sheffield United and Manchester City v Arsenal.
- A full fixture list will then be played on the weekend of June 19-21. **All games will be played without fans in attendance.**
- The Premier League was suspended on March 13 due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Revision Points

Organization	Headquarters	Key Person
All India Football Federation	Dwarka, Delhi	Praful Patel

Indian Steel Association	New Delhi	Dilip Oommen
United Nations	New York, USA	António Guterres
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	Washington D.C.	Kristalina Georgieva
FINA	Lausanne, Switzerland	Julio Maglione
NTPC Ltd	New Delhi	Gurdeep Singh
Oil and Natural Gas Corporation	New Delhi	Shashi Shanker
Power Finance Corporation	New Delhi	Ravinder Singh Dhillon
India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited	New Delhi	PR Jaishankar
World Economic Forum (WEF)	Cologny, Switzerland	Klaus Schwab
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	Beijing, China	Jin Lique
World Bank	Washington D.C, USA	David Malpass
Asian Development Bank	Mandaluyong, Philippines	Masatsugu Asakawa
International Cricket Council (ICC)	Dubai, UAE	Manu Sawhney
Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)	New Delhi	DilipChenoy
International Hockey Federation (FIH)	Lausanne, Switzerland	Narinder Batra
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	New York, USA	Henrietta H. Fore
World Health Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Tedros Adhanom
SoftBank Group	Tokyo, Japan	Masayoshi Son
United Nations Environment Programme	Nairobi, Kenya	Inger Anderson
Defence Research Development Organization	New Delhi	Sateesh Reddy
FlipKart	Bengaluru	Kalyan Krishnamurthy
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization	Paris	Audrey Azoulay
Indian Council of Medical Research	New Delhi	Balram Bhargava
World Trade Organization (WTO)	Geneva	Roberto Azevedo
National Anti-Doping Agency	New Delhi	Navin Agarwal
New Development Bank	Shanghai, Chennai	Macros Troyjo
Archeological Survey of India	New Delhi	V Vidyvathi
National Real Estate Development Council	New Delhi	Rajesh Goel

Important Peoples' in News

Sania Mirza Becomes First Indian To Get Nominated For Fed Cup Heart Award

- Indian tennis star **Sania Mirza** became **the first Indian to be nominated** for the **Fed Cup Heart Award** from the Asia/Oceania zone along with Indonesia's Priska Medelyn Nugrorho.
- Sania had recently made a comeback to Fed Cup after four years. With her 18-month son Izhaan present in the stands, Sania had helped India qualify for the Play-offs for the first time.
- The winners of the Heart Awards will be determined by online voting by fans which will go live on May 1 and will go on until May 8.
- In Fed Cup Heart Award's 11th edition this year, Anett Kontaveit (Estonia) and Eleonora Molinaro (Luxembourg) have been nominated from Europe/Africa zone while Fernanda Contreras Gomez of Mexico and Paraguay's Veronica Cepede Royg have been nominated from the Americas.

ISL side FC Goa appoints Spaniard Juan Ferrando as new head coach

- **FC Goa** appointed **Spaniard Juan Ferrando** as the **club's new head coach** for the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL) season and AFC Champions League campaign. A UEFA Pro License holder, Ferrando will replace Sergio Lobera, another Spaniard, who was sacked in January midway last season. Former India player and assistant coach **Clifford Miranda** was guiding the team till the end of the season.
- The Goan side had become the first Indian club to earn a direct berth in the group stage of the AFC Champions League after topping the league phase of the ISL.
- The 39-year-old began his career with the academy at RCD Espanyol before moving to Barcelona B. He then coached the likes of FC RICOH Premia, Terrassa CF and CE Hospitalet before moving to Malaga, to become the coach of the youth team.
- In England, he worked as the technical coach of Premier League stars like Cesc Fabregas, Robin Van Persie and Angel Rangel, among others.

Spanish Striker Aritz Aduriz Announces Retirement from Football

- **Athletic Bilbao striker Aritz Aduriz** announced his **retirement from football**.
- The 39-year-old Aduriz took decision after finding out he needs a hip replacement.
- Aduriz, who also played for Spanish clubs Valladolid, Mallorca and Valencia, leaves Athletic as the club's sixth-highest scorer with 172 goals. He was a member of Spain's squad at the 2016 European Championship in France.

Ross Taylor bags New Zealand Cricketer of the year award

- Veteran batsman **Ross Taylor** bagged the prestigious **New Zealand Cricketer of the Year award**, winning the **Sir Richard Hadlee Medal** for the third time for excelling across formats.
- In what has been a season of milestones, Taylor leapfrogged Stephen Fleming as New Zealand's leading run-scorer in Test matches and became the first cricketer from any country to play 100 international matches in all three formats.
- He scored 1389 runs in the last season in all formats and was an integral member of the New Zealand team which reached the World Cup final in July.
- **Pacer Tim Southee** followed his **best bowler award** with the **Test Player of the Year recognition**.
- Southee scalped 25 wickets at an average of 16.4 in the four Test matches that New Zealand won during the awards period.

Former world snooker champion Peter Ebdon retires to avoid spinal surgery

- Former **World Snooker champion Peter Ebdon** has retired from the sport to avoid having to endure daunting spinal surgery.

- The **49-year-old**, who has been plagued by neck, back, shoulder and arm pain, won the **2002 world title**, beating Stephen Hendry in an 18-17 final thriller. He was also a two-time runner-up.
- Won the 2002 world championship, beating Stephen Hendry in a 18-17 final thriller, reached the 1996 and 2006 finals(runner-up), 2006 Maplin Electronics UK Championship, UK Championship runner-up in 1995.
- Became the 1st to make 4 century breaks in five frames, in the European Open qualifying competition at Blackpool on 6 Sep 1992 & is one of 9 players to win both the World and the UK Championships.

Egyptian tennis player Youssef Hossam follows brother in receiving life ban for match-fixing

- **Egyptian player Youssef Hossam** has been banned from professional **tennis** for **life** for **match-fixing**, two years after his brother was also permanently excluded from the sport on corruption charges.
- A statement from the Tennis Integrity Unit stated the 21-year-old Youssef Hassam, provisionally suspended since May 2019, had been banned for life following his conviction on multiple match-fixing and associated corruption charges.
- These involved 21 breaches of tennis' anti-corruption programme, including eight cases of match-fixing, six of facilitating gambling, two of soliciting other players not to use best efforts, three failures to report corrupt approaches and two failures to co-operate with a TIU investigation.
- Hossam, currently a lowly 810 in the ATP singles rankings, having reached a career high of 291 in December 2017, is now "permanently excluded from competing in or attending any sanctioned tennis event organised or recognised by the governing bodies of the sport, the TIU statement stated.

Discus thrower Sandeep Kumari gets 4-year ban for dope flunk

- Discus thrower **Sandeep Kumari** has been slapped with a **four-year ban** by **WADA's** Athletics Integrity Unit for flunking a dope test , nearly two years after her sample was deemed clean by the NDTL.
- The National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) had failed to detect the banned substance a steroid which was present in her blood sample, collected by NADA officials during the **National Inter-State Championships** in June 2018 in Guwahati.
- Kumari had won the **gold** with a throw of 58.41m.
- Not only Kumari's but samples of four other Indians, including 2017 Asian champion **quarter-miler Nirmala Sheoran's** had returned negative at NDTL but were found positive when tested in Montreal. **Jhuma Khatun**, one of them, was also handed a **four-year ban**, last month.

Indian Cricketer Ajinkya Rahane becomes brand ambassador for edtech company ELSA Corp

- **ELSA Corp** (English Language Speech Assistant Corporation), India a **global Edu-tech company** has announced the appointment of **Ajinkya Rahane**, the Vice-Captain of the Indian Cricket Test Team, as its **brand ambassador for India**, Middle East, ANZ & SAARC. ELSA Speak is a Mobile App, which uses **speech recognition technology and artificial intelligence (A.I.)** to help language learners improve their English pronunciation.
- The announcement was made through a web conference in the presence of Ajinkya Rahane along with Manish Parikh, Country Head – India, ELSA Corp.
- Ajinkya Rahane will be endorsing the brand's mobile application. This association aims to popularize ELSA Speak amongst Indian individuals who want to better their English pronunciation.
- ELSA Speak is an A.I. powered app aimed at estimated 1.5 billion language learners in the world to learn to speak English more fluently, thereby changing their careers and lives. ELSA uses proprietary speech technology with deep learning and A.I. to detect people's pronunciation mistakes with 95%+ accuracy.

- The app listens to the way language learners pronounce words, sentences or conversations to pinpoint exact errors and provide real-time feedback on pronunciation mistakes with specific suggestions on how to improve.

Para-athlete Deepa Malik retires, to head India's Paralympic Committee

- Para-athlete **Deepa Malik** followed the **National Sports Code guidelines** and announced her retirement to hold her post as the **president of the Paralympic Committee** of India.
- As per the National Sports Code, an active athlete cannot hold an official post in any federation, and citing this rule, Malik stated it is important for her to announce retirement and set a good example to follow the rules and guidelines.
- For election purpose had already submitted a letter to PCI long back, awaited decisions of Highcourt to validate new committee n now for affiliation with MYAS making a public declaration of retirement from active sports. Time to serve parasports and support others to achieve.
- Deepa Malik has been a flag bearer for para-sports in the country and she was awarded **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna** on August 29 last year and as a result, she became the first Indian woman para-athlete to be conferred with the accolade.
- She is the first Indian woman to earn a medal at the Paralympic Games and has won 58 national and 23 international medals. Malik is also a recipient of the **Padma Shri** and **Arjuna Award**.

Di Gregorio EPO saga ends with a four-year ban

- Cyclist **Rémy di Grégorio's** doping case from the 2018 Paris-Nice has finally been concluded with the UCI imposing a four-year ban until **March 7, 2022**.
- He has been banned for 4 years by the **International Cycling Union (UCI)** for using a form of banned blood-boosting hormone EPO (Erythropoietin).

NADA provisionally suspends Savita Kumari, Ankit Shishodia for violating anti-doping rules

- The **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** has provisionally suspended **powerlifters Savita Kumari and Ankit Shishodia** for violating **anti-doping rules**
- Athletes were given an opportunity to present themselves before the Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) and explain their cases on the date and time fixed by the panel for a hearing. However, due to COVID 19, followed by lockdown in the country no sitting of the panel could take place in April, a release by the company states.
- Furthermore, Dope Control Officers, who are front-line medical workers in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, will not be sent for sample collection when training of athletes resumes following lockdown relaxation, NADA's Director General Navin Agarwal told
- NADA is gearing up for vigorous resumption of sample collection and testing after the home ministry allowed sports complexes and stadia to open but without spectators. Agarwal stated elaborate guidelines have been prepared and the body is now waiting for sports ministry's green light to start sample collection.

Tennis star Naomi Osaka becomes world's highest paid female athlete

- Japanese tennis star **Naomi Osaka** has become the **highest paid female athlete** in the world, topping **American great Serena Williams**.
- Osaka earned \$37.4 million in the last 12 months from prize money and endorsements, \$1.4 million more than Williams, setting an all-time earnings record for a female athlete in a single year. Maria Sharapova previously held the record with \$29.7 million in 2015, news agency IANS reported.
- Since Forbes began tracking women athletes' income in 1990, tennis players have topped the annual list every year.

- Osaka, a two-time Grand Slam champion, ranks No. 29 on the 2020 Forbes list of the world's 100 top-paid athletes while Williams is No. 33.
- The complete Forbes list, due to be released next week, has not featured two women since 2016, the magazine says.
- The ascension puts an end to a decisive winning streak for Williams, who has been the world's highest-paid female athlete each of the past four years, with annual pre-tax income ranging from \$18 million to \$29 million.
- The 23-time Grand Slam champion has collected almost \$300 million during her career from endorsers that have swarmed the 38-year-old star.
- Osaka, the winner of 2018 US Open and 2019 Australian Open, has secured lucrative deals with global brands like Procter & Gamble, All Nippon Airways and Nissin.

Sri Lanka suspends fast bowler Shehan Madushanka

- **Sri Lanka fast bowler Shehan Madushanka** has been **suspended** from all forms of cricket with immediate effect after he was arrested for alleged possession of illegal drugs.
- Madushanka was in possession of two grams of heroin.
- The 25-year-old took a hat-trick in his first one-day international against Bangladesh in January, 2018, in Dhaka and played two more Twenty20 internationals on that tour before being sidelined with injuries.

US tennis star Jamie Hampton announces retirement

- Former World Top 25 and **US tennis star Jamie Hampton** has announced her retirement from professional tennis.
- The 30-year-old last played an official match six years ago, as she suffered numerous injuries after reaching a career-high ranking of World No.24 in July of 2013.
- The talented right-hander from Alabama began the 2014 season with a run to the semifinals of the ASB Classic in Auckland, New Zealand, but was unable to play against Venus Williams due to a hip injury.
- After that, Hampton underwent six surgeries over the next 18 months, which included two on her right hip. Hampton also reached one WTA doubles final, alongside Anna Tatishvili at the Bell Challenge in Quebec City in 2011, where they finished as runners-up to Abigail Spears and Raquel Atawo.

Indian long-distance runner Kiranjeet Kaur handed four-year ban after being tested positive for doping

- Long-distance runner **Kiranjeet Kaur**, who won the Tata Steel Kolkata last year, has been handed a **four-year ban** by **World Athletics' anti-doping** body for returning positive for a banned substance in a test conducted in Doha.
- Kaur will be stripped of the top prize she won at the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K. Her ban period has begun from 15 December, the date of in-competition sample collection. She was provisionally suspended by World Athletics on 26 February.
- Kaur had clocked 1:38:56 to finish 11th overall and first among Indians in the Kolkata 25K on 15 December last year.

Important Mergers and Acquisitions

Silver Lake to buy stake in Jio Platforms: What you need to know about the US firm

- **Silver Lake**, **American private equity firm**, has stated it will buy about **1.15% stake in Jio Platforms**, weeks after Facebook invested \$5.7 billion in the digital arm of Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Industries Ltd.
- Silver Lake announced it will be investing **Rs 5,655.75 crore (about \$746.8 million)** in Jio Platforms, giving it a valuation of \$65 billion, a 12.5% premium to the value implied by the Facebook investment.

- Silver Lake, which has approximately \$40 billion in combined assets and committed capital, was launched in 1999 as a specialist firm focused on technology company investments.
- The portfolio of investments of the Menlo Park-headquartered PE firm collectively generates revenues of more than \$204 billion annually.
- For Silver Lake, this is the second investment in an Indian firm. It had invested in Bengaluru-based commodity trading and risk management software firm Eka Software in 2013.
- It has invested in dozens of tech firms over the years. They include video game engine maker Unity, Skype, consultancy firm Gartner, Alibaba's Ant Financial, and Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing, several of it in recent weeks.

GSK Sells \$3.35 Billion Stake In Hindustan Unilever

- British pharmaceutical giant **GlaxoSmithKline PLC** is selling its **5.7% stake** in **Hindustan Unilever Ltd.** for about **254.8 billion Indian rupees (US\$3.35 billion)**.
- The stake was part of the payment for a portfolio sold by GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Ltd. to Unilever.
- GSK expects net proceeds from the sale of GSK Consumer Healthcare to be £2.9 billion, up from its initial estimate of £2.4 billion following the appreciation of Hindustan Unilever's share price since the merger closed in April.
- On 1 April 2020, GSK announced the completion of the disinvestment of its popular healthcare drink brand Horlicks and other healthcare products from Unilever in India. It sold 5.69 % stake in HUL, which they got via an amalgamation deal for about ₹25,400 crore.
- HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Pvt. Ltd., J.P. Morgan India Pvt. Ltd. and Morgan Stanley India Co. Pvt. Ltd. are acting as joint placement agents for the placing.

Facebook acquires GIF-making website GIPHY

- **Facebook** has acquired the popular **GIF website GIPHY** and is planning to integrate its **GIF library** to its photo-sharing app, Instagram.
- Facebook acquired the GIF-making and sharing website for reportedly **\$400 million**, according to a report by Axios.
- GIPHY is one of the most popular GIF-making and sharing sites on the internet. The website allows users to create, share and remix GIFs. Facebook had already been using GIPHY's API for its family of apps including Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram. The social media giant in February had also introduced a new feature on Instagram that now lets users reply to their friend's stories using Giphy's GIFs.
- About 50 per cent of GIPHY's traffic comes from these apps, half of which is from Instagram alone.
- Despite the acquisition, GIPHY, for now, will not lose its appeal as the GIF-making website. Facebook had stated that people will still be able to upload GIFs.

Accenture acquires Ahmedabad-based Byte Prophecy

- **Accenture** has acquired **Byte Prophecy**, an automated insights and **big data analytics company** based in **Ahmedabad**, to meet the growing demand for enterprise-scale AI and digital analytics solutions across the region.
- The acquisition will add nearly 50 data science and data engineering experts, with a particular focus on insight automation, to Accenture Applied Intelligence, the company stated in a statement .
- The move will deepen existing consulting and technology capabilities that help clients in areas such as data foundations and advanced analytics, it stated

- Founded in 2011, Byte Prophecy has worked closely with Accenture Ventures since 2018 on open innovation efforts, collaborating and co-innovating with Accenture and its clients in Asia Pacific on advanced data and analytics projects.

US-Based General Atlantic To Buy 1.3% Stake In Jio Platforms For Rs 6,598 Crore

- Reliance Industries announced that US-based private equity firm **General Atlantic** will invest **Rs 6,598.38 crore** for a **1.34 per cent** stake in **Jio Platforms**. That marked Jio Platforms' **fourth** major deal with a US-based technology investor within a month, following investments from internet major **Facebook** and private equity companies **Silver Lake** and **Vista Equity Partners**.
- The General Atlantic deal values Reliance Industries' digital unit Jio Platforms, which houses Reliance Jio Infocomm, at an equity value of Rs 4.91 lakh crore and an enterprise value of Rs 5.16 lakh crore.
- With its deal with General Atlantic, Reliance Jio has so far raised **Rs 67,194.75 crore**.
- The string of investments began in April with **Facebook** announcing an investment of Rs **43,574 crore** for a **9.99 per cent** stake in Jio Platforms.
- In May, **Silver Lake** announced an investment of **Rs 5,656 crore** in Jio Platforms, which was followed by **Rs 11,367 crore** from **Vista Equity Partners**.
- Saudi Arabia's **Public Investment Fund (PIF)** is also considering to buy a minority stake in Jio.

Tata Consumer to acquire PepsiCo's stake in NourishCo Beverages

- **Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL)** stated it will **acquire PepsiCo's stake** in **NourishCo Beverages Limited**—a **50:50 joint venture** between the two companies as it moves to build a strong play in the packaged beverages market.
- The move comes as India's leading conglomerate Tata Group has moved to consolidate its packaged consumer goods business to form Tata Consumer Products that now has a wide play across foods and beverages.
- The JV was formed in 2010 as the two joined hands to develop and sell a range of healthy hydration beverages. NourishCo Beverages Limited sells hydration brands such as Himalayan mineral water, Tata Gluco Plus and Tata Water Plus.
- Tata Consumer Products Ltd is a consumer products arm that covers the food and beverage interests of the Tata Group.
- The new business created by the merger was consolidated under Tata Consumer Products Ltd to include various food and beverage brands—Tetley Tea, Eight O'Clock Coffee, Tata Tea, Tata salt and Tata Sampann, which sells packaged pulses and spices.

Airtel acquires 10 per cent stake in AI startup Voicezen

- **Bharti Airtel** has acquired **10 per cent stake** in **Gurgaon-based start-up Voicezen**, which focusses on conversational **artificial intelligence technologies**, in an all-cash deal, the private operator stated.
- The stake purchase will give Bharti Airtel preferred access to Voicezen's technologies, which can be deployed across its customer touchpoints in multiple languages, Airtel stated in a statement without disclosing the amount it paid for buying the stake.
- The acquisition has been made by the company under its fast expanding Airtel Startup Accelerator Programme, the company noted.
- AI is a big focus area for Airtel given the deep positive impact the technology can have in transforming customer experience. Voicezen has built some promising products that are very relevant for a market like India.

- Voicezen has been working on developing advanced solutions that leverage machine learning, AI, speech to text and voice technologies to offer real time analytics to help brands engage with customers.
- The global conversational AI market size is expected to grow from USD 4.2 billion in 2019 to USD 15.7 billion by 2024, according to a research report.

CCI approves 100% acquisition of Emami Cement by NVCL

- The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has approved acquisition of **100%** of the total issued and paid up share capital of **Emami Cement Limited (ECL)**, on a fully diluted basis, by **Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Limited (NVCL)**.
- The **Emami group and Nuvoco** had signed a deal to open the **account with Kotak Bank**.
- Emami had entered into a binding agreement on 6 February with Nuvoco Vistas for the divestment of its 100% equity stake in Emami Cement Ltd for an enterprise value of **Rs.5,500 crore**. At the time of announcing the sale of the cement business, Emami had mentioned that the transaction was expected to be completed in three-four months.
- This is **Nirma's second cement acquisition** in east India. In 2016, **Nirma acquired Lafarge India's cement assets** at an enterprise value of **\$1.4 billion**. Lafarge India operated three cement plants and two grinding stations with a total capacity of around 11mtpa.
- The combined operations will span three facilities in Chhattisgarh, two each in Rajasthan and West Bengal and one each in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Haryana.

KKR to buy 2.32% Jio Platforms stake for Rs.11,367 crore

- Private equity giant **KKR** will buy **2.32% stake** in **Jio Platforms** for **Rs11,367 crore**.
- The latest transaction gives Jio Platforms an equity valuation of **Rs4.91 trillion** and an enterprise value of **Rs5.16 trillion**.
- This is the **fifth stake sale deal** that RIL has announced in its subsidiary, all combining to give India's largest private sector conglomerate **Rs78,562 crore** against **17.12% stake** of **five foreign investors**.
- The last transaction was private equity **General Atlantic** bought **1.34%** in **Jio** for **Rs.6,598 crore**.
- The **first and the largest stake** sale out of the five was that of **9.99%** to **Facebook** for **Rs43,573.62 crore**.
- US private equity firm **Silver Lake** said it will invest **Rs 5,655.75 crore** (\$747 million) in **Jio Platforms** for a **1.15% stake**.
- Private equity firm **Vista Equity Partners** will invest **Rs11,367 crore** in **Jio Platforms** for a **2.32%** stake.

IRDAI allows Union Bank of India to continue 30% holding in IndiaFirst Life Insurance

- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has allowed **Union Bank of India's** proposal to continue with its **30 percent holding** in **IndiaFirst Life Insurance** with the condition that the lender will hold no control in the management of the insurer.
- Earlier, the bank was expected to divest either the entire stake in IndiaFirst Life Insurance, or a considerable part of it, as IRDAI guidelines restrict a lender to own more than **10 percent stake in two insurance companies**.
- The state-owned lender also holds **25.1 percent stake** in **Star Union Dai-Chi Life** and it received a promoter stake in IndiaFirst Life Insurance in April previously held by Andhra Bank following its 'mega' merger on April 1 with Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.

ITC to acquire spice-maker Sunrise Foods

- **FMCG major ITC Ltd** will acquire city-based packaged spice-maker **Sunrise Foods** for an undisclosed sum.
- The company has entered into a share purchase agreement to **acquire 100 per cent** of the equity share capital of Sunrise Foods Private Ltd (SFPL).

- SFPL is a 70-year-old legacy brand engaged in the business of spices under the trademark 'Sunrise'. The brand is a market leader in eastern India in the packaged spices category — both in basic and blended segments.
- The share purchase agreement is "subject to fulfilment of various terms and conditions as specified", ITC stated.
- According to market sources, the proposed acquisition is aligned with ITC's strategy to rapidly scale up its FMCG business in a profitable manner.
- Branded Spices is an exciting and high growth segment as Consumer shifts from unbranded to branded due to higher focus on safety, trust and quality, Roy added.
- ITC Ltd already has a spices range under the 'Aashirvaad' brand and the company claims to be a market leader in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. It is also one of the leading exporters of high-quality spices.

ITES signs agreement for acquiring 24% stake in IRSDC

- **ITES** stated it has signed an agreement for acquiring **24% stake** in **Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation (IRSDC)** for **Rs 48 crore** with **Rail Land Development Authority** and **IRCON International** being the other equity partners.
- During this lockdown period, it has been able to successfully deliver the **188 RKM Vijaypur-Pachore Road-Maksi section** railway electrification project in Madhya Pradesh.
- key project activities have been resumed at various sites like rail line doubling project at Gooty-Dharmavaram, railway electrification work in Rajasthan, project monitoring services at several rail connectivity work of power plants and coal mines, workshops modernization at Bikaner in Rajasthan, Kurdawadi in Maharashtra, Lumding in Assam, Sarla in Odisha, quality assurance work at various locations etc.
- With these operations, ITES is estimated to have achieved more than half of its capacity and will scale up its activities with easing of more restrictions.

Ola Electric acquires Etergo BV, a Netherlands-based electric scooter OEM

- **Ola Electric Mobility Pvt Ltd** announced the acquisition of **Etergo BV**, an electric scooter OEM based out of Amsterdam. With this acquisition, Ola Electric plans to leverage **Etergo's design** and engineering capabilities to build its smart electric two-wheeler for international and national markets, with the India launch planned for **2021**. Ola did not disclose financial details of the acquisition.
- The acquisition will further bolster Ola Electric's engineering and design capabilities with the Etergo team's extensive vehicle development experience with leading automotive companies such as Tesla, General Motors, Ferrari, Jaguar, and BMW. Etergo's team will continue to be based out of Amsterdam as they join Ola Electric.
- Founded in 2014, Etergo has developed an all-electric **AppScooter**, which has won multiple awards across the world for its innovative design and engineering at CES 2019 and Automotive Brand Contest, Germany amongst others.
- First revealed in 2018, the AppScooter uses swappable high energy density batteries to deliver a range up to 240 km and class-leading acceleration.

IL&FS gets NCLT nod to sell stake in GIFT City to Gujarat govt

- **Debt-laden IL&FS** will sell its entire stake in **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Limited (GIFTCL)** to the **Gujarat government**.
- IL&FS has a **50 per cent stake** in GIFTCL, which comprises a multi-services Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and International Finance Services Centre (IFSC) totalling approximately **6 lakh square feet**.

- The Gujarat government has agreed to pay positive equity value of 100 per cent of IL&FS's stake in GIFTCL. This would amount to Rs.32.7 crore. Valuation by an independent agency earlier had pegged a negative value to the equity stake. The IL&FS Board had sought a higher value given the dire situation of the company.
- NCLT has now given its approval to the stake sale at Rs.32.7 crore. Last year, the Gujarat government had indicated a willingness to take over the project. IL&FS Group invited Expressions of Interest (Eoi) for real estate space totalling 4.85 lakh sq ft, as it looks to monetise its assets.

YES Bank acquires 24.19% stake in Dish TV through pledged shares

- Private sector lender **YES Bank** has acquired **24.19 per cent** in **Dish TV**, making it the second-largest shareholder in the direct-to-home (DTH) company.
- The bank's move to pick up a stake in Dish TV comes following an invocation of pledged shares to the tune of **445.3 million** in the firm.
- This is the sixth such transaction by YES Bank in a year in various companies.
- Yes Bank has acquired majority stake in a non-banking businesses simply due to invocation of pledge against shares of a company that had availed loans from the bank and later failed to repay the dues.

Revision points

Company	Merging Company
Ola Electric Mobility Pvt Ltd	Etergo BV (Netherlands based)
ITES	IRSDC (24%)
ITC	Sunrise Foods Private Ltd (100%)
Union Bank of India	IndiaFirst Life Insurance (30%)
KKR	Jio Platforms (2.32%)
NVCL	Emami Cement (100%)
Airtel	Voicezen (10%)
Tata Consumer Products Ltd	NourishCo Beverages (PepsiCo's stake)
General Atlantic	Jio Platforms (1.3%)
Accenture	Byte Prophecy
Facebook	GIPHY
GSK	Hindustan Unilever (5.7%)
Silver Stake	Jio Platform (1.15%)
YES Bank	Dish TV (24.19%)

Important Web Portals and Mobile Apps

Over 325000 people are using "Janaushadhi Sugam" Mobile App to access Janaushadhi kendras

- Due to COVID-19 crisis **Janaushadhi Sugam Mobile App** is helping people in a big way to locate their nearest Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMJAK) and availability of affordable generic medicine with its price.
- Over **325000 people** are using Janaushadhi Sugam Mobile App to avail the host of benefits provided by it.

- This mobile application for **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)** has been developed by **Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** under Department of Pharmaceuticals , Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India.
- Janaushadhi Sugam Mobile App is available on both Android & I-phone platforms. It can be downloaded free of cost by the user from Google Play Store and Apple Store.

CSIR's Kisan Sabha App to connect farmers to supply chain

- **The Central Road Research Institute (CRRI)**, a CSIR lab, has come up with an app called **Kisan Sabha** to resolve the problems related to the **agricultural supply chain**. The App was remotely launched by Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), **Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra**. The primary objective of Kisan Sabha is to connect farmers to supply chain and freight transportation management system.
- **Kisan Sabha** acts as a single stop for every entity related to **agriculture**, be they farmers who need a better price for the crops or mandi dealers who want to connect to more farmers or truckers who invariably go empty from the mandis.
- App also works for people in the agriculture services sector such as dealers of fertilizers/pesticides, who can reach out to more farmers for their services. It would also prove to be useful for those associated with cold stores or godowns.
- Kisan Sabha aims to provide the most economical and timely logistics support to the farmers and increase their profit margins by minimizing the interference of middlemen and directly connecting with the institutional buyers.
- It will also help in providing the best market rates for crops by comparing the prices in the nearest mandis, booking of freight vehicle at the cheapest cost, thereby giving maximum benefit to the farmers.

Chandigarh launches mobile app for COVID-19 "CHDCOVID"

- To spread awareness about COVID-19 in the city, the **Chandigarh Administration** launched a newly developed android base **mobile app "CHDCOVID"**.
- This will be a **single point platform** which will provide **all information related to COVID-19** in Chandigarh. The residents of Chandigarh can access all the guidelines, orders and notifications issued by Administration and Government of India on the mobile app.
- The app has been developed in-house by the **Society for Promotion of IT in Chandigarh (SPIC)**.

West Bengal govt launches exit app for stranded people of other states

- The **West Bengal government** launched an app for people from other states who are stranded in the state due to the lockdown and want to return to their native place, state Home secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay stated.
- He stated that since a large number of people from other states are stuck in West Bengal due to the lockdown, they can access the app for online permission to leave the state.
- Bandopadhyay stated that the app can be downloaded from the state government's '**Egiye Bangla**' website.
- Persons willing to go back to their native states can apply online through this '**Exit app**' and permission for the same will be practically automatic and extremely easy," the Home secretary stated.
- He also requested the nodal officers of all neighbouring states to ease the exit of such people for reaching their native places.

BharatPe launches two apps to curb need to touch handsets for checking transactions

- Merchant payment and lending network provider **BharatPe** launched **two voice-based applications** that will help accountholders access transactions and balance **without having to touch their phones** amid COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Paisa Bolega** - voice alerts of transactions - shopkeepers will be able to hear aloud instant confirmation of all payments received through their BharatPe QR, without touching the phone.
- **BharatPe Balance** will give information about the total money available to the shopkeeper across deposits, loans and daily collections through quick response (QR).
- Further, BharatPe Balance provides a single snapshot of the shopkeeper's daily QR collections, balance in 12 per cent interest a/c and the loan limit.
- Paisa Bolega is a button introduced in BharatPe App. This converts the shopkeeper's smartphone into a loud speaker, announcing the value of transaction received.
- Average ticket size has gone up 70 per cent from Rs 300 to Rs 500 as customers shop more for essentials.

Aarogya Setu Launches Mittr Telemedicine Portal For Consultations

- **Aarogya Setu** a one-stop solution for all healthcare and Covid-19 prevention needs, the Indian government has launched **a new Mittr portal** to offer **free telemedicine and consultation services** for coronavirus-related inquiries.
- **Aarogya Setu Mittr** would also allow the users **to book doorstep lab tests**.
- The Aarogya Setu app has partnered with Swasth Foundation, Project StepOne, Tata Bridgital Health and Tech Mahindra's healthcare initiative Connectsense Telehealth to offer teleconsultation service from verified doctors.
- The Aarogya Setu Mittr portal has been developed in **a public-private partnership (PPP)** through a high-powered committee involving departments and business leaders.
- The committee aimed to revamp the Aarogya Setu app to create a one-stop solution equipped with healthcare facilities, remote healthcare, and medical staff support.
- The government believes that this would reduce the burden on the Indian healthcare system by providing remote healthcare support.
- Aarogya Setu assures users that the data collected is encrypted and the portal is equipped with standard security features to protect the confidentiality and security of the information.

Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Shri Narendra Singh Tomar launches "The Saras Collection" on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal

- The Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj and Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, **Shri Narendra Singh Tomar**, launched **"The Saras Collection"** on the Government e Marketplace (**GeM**).
- A unique initiative of GeM and the DeenDayalAntyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development, **the Saras Collection** showcases **daily utility products made by rural self-help groups (SHGs)** and aims to provide SHGs in rural areas with market access to Central and State Government buyers.
- Under this initiative, the SHG sellers will be able to list their products in 5 product categories, namely (i) handicrafts, (ii) handloom and textiles, (iii) office accessories, (iv) grocery and pantry, and (v) personal care and hygiene. In the first phase, 913 SHGs from 11 States have already registered as sellers and 442 products have been on-boarded. In order to develop a scalable model capable of onboarding a large number of SHGs across the country in a short time frame, GeM has developed an API based integration mechanism with the NRLM database.
- The on-boarding of the SHGs under the initiative has been initially piloted in the States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The coverage shall be rapidly extended to enable a large number of SHGs from all the states/ Union Territories to sell their products to Government buyers.

Swachhata -MOHUA app -A citizen's tool to better city management

- **Swachhata MOHUA app** is a **highly popular grievance redressal tool** for citizens and under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat mission (Urban) , already it has has over 1.7 crore urban users across the country.
- This app has now been modified and strengthened further in order to enable citizens to get their COVID 19 related complaints also redressed by their respective Urban Local Bodies(ULBs).
- The pilot version of the revised App has been shared with select states and citizens earlier. Based on the feedback, the same is being launched across India.
- All complaints can be monitored at the Swachh city dash board, in the same manner as the ULBs monitor other complaints on Swachhata App on Swachh city.
- The revised version of the Swachhata App essentially leverage the popularity and huge userbase of the app to better support citizens during the COVID Pandemic. However the addition of these new categories has no impact on the existing categories of the App and citizens may continue to either of the categories. Under Swachh Bharat mission (URBAN) all are collectively working to ensure the safety and well being of citizens during the CoVID crisis.
- **MOHUA** has introduced these **nine additional Categories** of Complaints specific of COVID 19 on the Swachhata App to make it more responsive to the needs of the Present times. The ministry's move is a major boost to states and UTs as it helps in better management of cities in every aspect in the pandemic situation.

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath launches 'Ayush Kavach-Covid' App

- **Yogi Adityanath** launched '**Ayush Kavach-Covid**' app to help people get health remedies which can be useful in fight against COVID-19. The app has been developed by **AYUSH ministry**.
- The 'Ayush Kavach-Covid' App will provide s for measures to boost immunity based on natural resources.
- The app is designed to tell users how commonly available kitchen ingredients such as tulsi, clove and cinnamon can be used to enhance the body's immunity to fight against COVID-19. It also offers users the opportunity to seek advice from experts.

DGCA launches GARUD portal to fast-track approval to COVID-19 related drone operations

- **Civil Aviation Ministry** and **DGCA** have launched the **GARUD (Government Authorisation for Relief Using Drones) portal** for providing fast track conditional exemptions to government agencies for COVID-19 related drone operations.
- The step has been taken to aid government entities in addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19 and will remain in force until further orders.
- Civil Aviation Ministry stated, any violation of provisions will make the conditional exemption null and void and will lead to penal action.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan launches the 'AYUSH Sanjivani ' App and inter-disciplinary studies involving AYUSH interventions for COVID 19

- **Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Health & Family Welfare Minister** launched the '**AYUSH Sanjivani**' App and two AYUSH based studies related to COVID-19 situation in the presence of **Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, MoS (I/c), AYUSH** who participated through Video Conferencing from Goa.

- The '**AYUSH Sanjivani**' mobile app, which has been launched will help to generate data on acceptance and usage of AYUSH advocacies and measures among the population and its impact in prevention of COVID 19. It is developed by **Ministry of AYUSH and MEITY**.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan also launched **two more scientific studies**. One is the collaborative clinical research study on **Ayurveda interventions as prophylaxis** and as an add-on to standard care to COVID 19, which shall be a joint initiative of **Ministry of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** and **the Ministry of Science & Technology through Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)** with technical support of **ICMR**.
- The **Interdisciplinary Ayush R&D Task Force** headed by **Dr Bhushan Patvardhan**, Vice Chairman, University Grant Commission (UGC), has formulated and designed clinical research protocols for prophylactic studies and add-on interventions in COVID-19 positive cases through thorough review and consultative process of experts of high repute from different organisations across the country for studying four different interventions viz. **Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu, Guduchi +Pippali and a poly herbal formulation (AYUSH-64)**.
- **Ashwagandha** for the Prophylaxis Against **SARS-COV-2** in subjects with increased risk during the COVID 19 Pandemic: A comparison with Hydroxychloroquine in the health care providers.
- Effectiveness of Ayurveda Formulation as an adjunct to '**Standard of Care**' for the Treatment of Mild to Moderate COVID-19: A Randomized, Open Label, Parallel Efficacy, Active Control, Multi-Centre Exploratory Drug Trial.

Yogi Adityanath launches 'Pravasi Raahat Mitra' App for migrant workers

- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** launched the '**Pravasi Rahat Mitra**' App that is aimed at aiding **migrant citizens** coming to Uttar Pradesh from other states so that they can take advantage of government schemes. the app will also help to monitor their health besides providing jobs and livelihood, related to their skills.
- The data collection of these migrant citizens will be done through the app that has been developed by the state revenue department in collaboration with **United Nation Development Program**.
- The exchange of information by various departments of the government will help in planning and formulating programs for employment and livelihood of these migrant citizens.
- The app will have full details of the persons staying in the shelter center and the migrants who have reached their homes directly from other states.
- The basic information of the person such as name, educational qualification, temporary and permanent address, bank account details, Corona-related screening status and experience will be taken in the app. In this, details of more than 65 types of skills will be collected.
- The status of distribution of ration kits to migrant citizens will also be recorded in the app. The data collected through the app will be installed on the state-based **Integrated Information Management System**.

Mahindra Launches Digital Car Buying Platform 'Own-Online' To Boost Sales Amid Covid-19 Crisis

- **Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M)** has launched an **integrated online platform** that will provide end-to-end sales experience for prospective buyers amid the coronavirus pandemic. Under the new initiative **Own-Online**, a customer can finance, insure, exchange, accessories and own a company vehicle, in four simple steps, from the comfort of their homes.
- Under the initiative, the customers can personalise their vehicles, instantly generate an exchange, get finance and insurance quotations and make booking payment, making the car ownership journey end-to-end and online in the true sense.

- Besides, the company is also taking additional precautions across the customer interaction processes such as test drives, document collection and vehicle delivery to ensure high hygiene standards are maintained.

Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launches Central University of Odisha helpline 'Bharosa' to help students in distress

- Union HRD Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** launched the **Central University of Odisha's** helpline **"Bharosa"** and its helpline number **08046801010** through a virtual platform to help student community relieve its distress amid coronavirus COVID-19 crisis.
- The helpline aims at providing Cognitive Emotional Rehabilitation Services to all University Students of Odisha.
- The steps taken with regard to the new academic calendar and virtual mode of education.
- The Helpline launched by the Central University of Odisha is a great step towards that also the Central and State Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education across the country to emulate the Bharosa initiative.

MSME Ministry launches Champions portal for addressing grievances of small units

- **Union Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** has launched **CHAMPIONS** portal, a technology-driven **Control Room-Cum-Management Information System**, for addressing the grievances of smaller units in the country.
- The system utilizing modern ICT tools is aimed at assisting Indian MSMEs march into big league as National and Global CHAMPIONS.
- The **Champions** stand for **Creation and Harmonious Application of Modern Processes for Increasing the output and national strength**. Accordingly, the name of the system is CHAMPIONS.
- The portal is basically for making the smaller units big by solving their grievances, encouraging, supporting, helping and handholding. It is a real one-stop-shop solution of ministry.
- It is a technology packed control room-cum-management information system. In addition to ICT tools including telephone, internet and video conference, the system is enabled by Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics and Machine Learning.

Dibrugarh District administration takes to cloud-based application for citizen centric services

- **"Swagatam- Gateway to visit Government"**, an application software was launched in Dibrugarh by Deputy Commissioner Pallav Gopal Jha.
- The first-of-its-kind in the state of **Assam**, **Swagatam** a **cloud-based application software** was developed by NIC, Government of India and specially designed by NIC Team Dibrugarh as per the need of the district to facilitate the process of taking an appointment to meet the Deputy Commissioner for the common man of the district.
- It is also fully integrated on real time basis with GOI's main grievances portal CPGRAMS and MSME Ministry's own other web-based mechanisms. The entire ICT architecture is created in house with the help of NIC in no cost. Similarly, the physical infrastructure is created in one of ministry's dumping rooms in a record time.

Union HRD Minister launches AI-powered mobile app for mock tests for JEE Main, NEET 2020

- Union Human Resource Development Minister **Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** launched a new mobile app called the **'National Test Abhyas'**.
- The App has been developed by NTA to enable candidates to **take mock tests** for upcoming **exams such as JEE Main, NEET under the NTA's purview**.
- The app has been launched to facilitate candidates' access to high quality mock tests in the safety and comfort of their homes since there was a demand for making up the loss to students due to closure of educational institutions and NTA's Test-Practice Centers (TPCs) due to the continuing lockdown.

- Students across the country can use the App to access high quality tests, free of cost, in a bid to be fully prepared for the upcoming JEE, NEET and other competitive exams. The tests can be easily downloaded;

Baba Ramdev Led Patanjali To Launch E-Commerce Platform 'OrderMe' To Supply Swadeshi Goods

- **Baba Ramdev led Patanjali Ayurved** is in the process of launching an **e-commerce platform** to supply made-in-India items and swadeshi solutions.
- The proposed e-commerce site, named **OrderMe**, will deliver Patanjali's own ayurvedic products as well as connect the consumer to neighbourhood stores selling Indian products.
- The platform will deliver the products to at doorsteps free of cost within a few hours.
- Additionally, the platform will also offer **24X7 free medical advice** to people from approximately 1,500 doctors of Patanjali, as well as **yoga tutorials**.
- The platform will encourage the **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** distributing domestic items.

Aarogya Setu becomes open source

- **Aarogya Setu**, India's Covid-19 contact tracing, syndromic mapping and self assessment mobile app is now **open source**. NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant stated, transparency, privacy and security have been the core design principles of Aarogya Setu since its inception and opening of the source code upto the developer community signifies Government of India's continuing commitment to this principle. He stated, it is a unique thing as no other government product anywhere in the world has been open sourced at this scale.
- Mr Kant stated, the scale and size of Aarogya Setu is 115 million and it cuts across every smart phone and IVRS in 12 languages. He stated, in just 41 days the mobile app crossed 100 million. **open sourcing** an app's code means the government will publish it on a **public code repository**.
- With the release of the source code in the public domain, Government is looking to expand collaboration and to leverage the expertise of top technical brains and also to collectively build a robust and secure technology solution to help support the work of frontline health workers in fighting this pandemic together.
- On 2nd April, Government launched Aarogya Setu mobile App for helping augment the efforts of limiting the spread of COVID19, with an objective of enabling Bluetooth based contact tracing, mapping of likely hotspots and dissemination of relevant information.

Facebook launches CatchUp, an audio-only calling app that shows who's ready to chat now

- **Facebook's internal R&D group, NPE Team**, has launched a new app called **CatchUp** that makes it easier for friends and family in the U.S. to coordinate phone calls or set up group calls with up to 8 people.
- While there are a number of group chat apps available to users today, what makes CatchUp unique is that the calls it enables are audio-only, not video, and it flags when users are available. In addition, CatchUp won't need a Facebook account to use the service — the app works with your phone's contacts list.
- Similarly, CatchUp shows users as **"Ready to Talk"** in the top section of its homescreen, with offline users and other contacts listed below.
- Facebook explains the app's intention is to address one of the key reasons people no longer make phone calls — they don't know when someone has time to talk and they don't want to interrupt them.
- Meanwhile, calls that can't be answered go to voicemails that recipients don't bother checking, which forces communication to go through text messaging or chat apps instead. And while video chats are on the rise, a phone

call is often more convenient as users aren't always video-ready or they're trying to multi-task, not sit in front of a screen.

- CatchUp approaches the problem of not knowing if a phone call would bother someone by allowing you to see who is ready and able to talk as soon as you launch the app.

NPCI launches AI virtual assistant PAi to create product awareness

- **National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI)** has launched an artificial intelligence (AI) based chatbot, **PAi**, to create awareness around its products like FASTag, RuPay, UPI, AePS on a real time basis.
- The AI virtual assistant, PAi will be available round the clock and help users with access to accurate information on NPCI products.
- Customers can ask queries in English and Hindi, via text or voice on the websites of NPCI, RuPay, and UPI Chalega.
- Through PAi, users can get verified automated responses to their queries on all NPCI's products. PAi would also be accessible to global RuPay cardholders as well.
- PAi is developed by Bengaluru based startup CoRover Private Limited.

Ravi Shankar Prasad launches India's National Artificial Intelligence Portal

- The **Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Law and Justice and Communications Ravi Shankar Prasad** launched **India's national Artificial Intelligence Portal** called **www.ai.gov.in**
- The portal will work as a one stop digital platform for AI related developments in India, sharing of resources such as articles, startups, investment funds in AI, resources, companies and educational institutions related to AI in India.
- The portal will also share documents, case studies, research reports etc. It has section about learning and new job roles related to AI.
- This portal has been jointly developed by the **Ministry of Electronics and IT and IT Industry**. National e-Governance Division of Ministry of Electronics and IT and **NASSCOM** from the IT industry will jointly run this portal.
- He also launched a National Program for the youth, **"Responsible AI for Youth"**.
- The aim of this Program is to give the young students of our country a platform and empower them with appropriate new age tech mind-set, relevant AI skill-sets and access to required AI tool-sets to make them digitally ready for the future.
- The Program has been created and launched by the National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics & IT in collaboration with Intel India, with support from **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Human Resource Development**. DoSE&L will help reach-out to State Education Departments to nominate teachers as per eligibility criteria.

Revision Points

Applications/Web portals	Launched By/Developed By
PAi	NPCI
Catch UP	Facebook
Order Me	Patanjali
National Test Abhyas	Union HRD Ministry
Swagatam- Gateway to visit Government	Dibrugarh District Administration
CHAMPIONS portal	MSME Ministry
Central University of Odisha's helpline Bharosa	Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'

Own - Online	Mahindra & Mahindra
Pravasi Raahat Mitra	Uttar Pradesh
AYUSH Sanjivani	Ministry of AYUSH & MEITY
GARUD	DGCA
Ayush Kavach-Covid	Uttar Pradesh
Swachhata MOHUA app	Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
The Saras Collection	Narendra Singh Tomar
Mitr portal	Arogya Setu
Paisha Bolega & BhartaPe Balace	BharatPe
Exit App	West Bengal
CHDCOVID	Chandigarh
Kisan Sabha App	CRRI
National Artificial Intelligence Portal	MEITY

Important Obituaries

Name	Field
Hema Bharali (Padma Shri Awardee)	Freedom Fighter (Assam)
Chuni Goswami (Arjun , Padmashri awardee)	Footballer (Mohonbagan Ratna award, Banga Bibhusan)
Denis Goldberg	South African anti-apartheid activist
Ronald Vivian Smith (Last Column in the Hindu - How Eurasian women took to ghazals and traditional dances)	Author and Columnist
Ajay Kumar Tripathi	Judicial Member, Lokpal of India
K S Nissar Ahmed (Padma Shri Awardee)	Kannada Poet & Writer
Dalit Ezhilmalai	Former Union minister & organising secretary of AIADMK
Dimitris Kremastinos	Greece's former health minister, cardiologist
Hari Shankar Vasudevan	Historian
Betty Wright	Grammy winning Singer (Her 1 st album - 'My First Time Around')
Juvvadi Ratnakar Rao	Former Congress Minister (3 times MLA -AP)
Raja Rangappa Naik	Former JDS MP (Raichur-Karnataka)
Shafique Ansari	Actor (Appeared in Sony TV's Crime Patrol)
Jerry Stiller	Comedian
Sai Gundewar	Bollywood Actor
Anisuzzaman	Educationist
Bob Watson (USA)	Baseball Player (Houston Astros legend)
Debesh Roy (His first book was Jajati)	Bengali author (Saitya Akademi winner)

Arthur Summons (Australia)	Rugby league captain
Hossein Kazempour Ardebili	OPEC governor - Iran
Saleh Abdullah Kamel (Founder of the Dallah Albaraka Group)	Saudi Billionaire Businessman
Ratnakar Matkari	Marathi writer & Playwright
Purushothaman	Drums player, music conductor and percussionist
Prabhakar Shastri (Madhya Pradesh)	spiritual leader (Known as Daddaji)
Shyamala G Bhave	Vocalist (Bestowed with the title of Ubhaya Gaana Vidushi)
Balbir Singh	Indian Hockey Player
Mohit Baghel	Actor (Best known for playing Amar Chaudhary in superstar Salman Khan's Ready)
Ashley Cooper	Australian Tennis player (4-time Grand Slam Singles Champion)
R Shanmugam	Tamil Nadu Football player (Played for Mohun Bagan)
Hana Kimura	Japanese Wrestler
Gigi Simoni	Former Inter Milan coach (Winner of UEFA Cup)
Mujtaba Hussain (Padma Shri awardee)	Urdu writer and satirist
Veerendra Kumar (MD of Mathrubhumi)	Rajya Sabha MP , 3 times chairman of Press Trust of India
Stanley Ho (Known as King of Gambling)	Trader who built a casino empire in Macau
Yogesh Gaur	Lyricist
Ajit Jogi	First CM of Chhattisgarh
Bejan Daruwalla	Astrologer